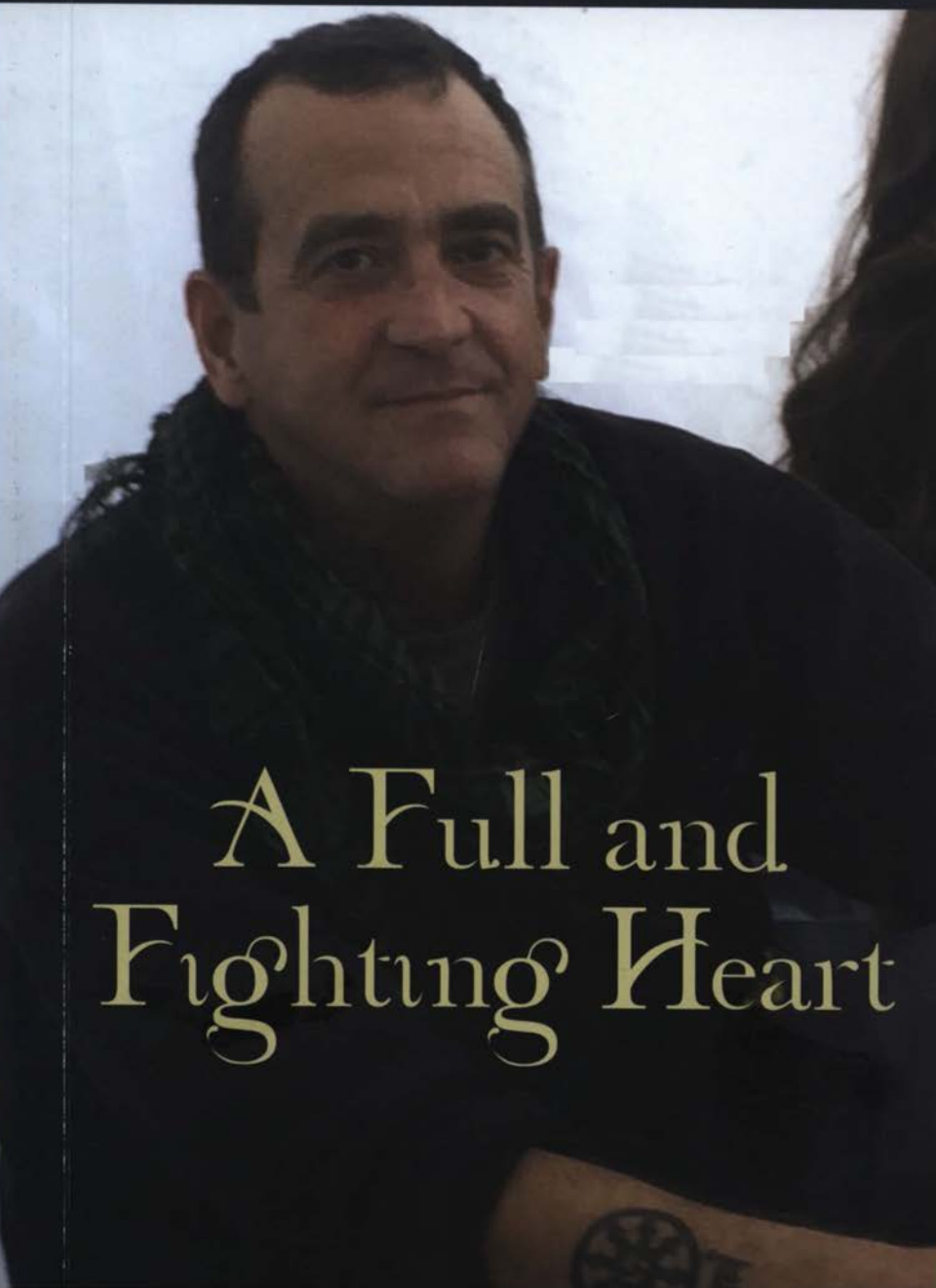
Memories of, and Writings by,
Paul Z. Simons



A Full and Fighting Heart

A Full and Fighting Heart

memories of, and writing by,
Paul Z. Simons
aka El Errante

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A Full and Fighting Heart

LBC editors

Paul Simons was one of our favorite people. During the most productive years of our relationship (about the past eight) we would get a couple visits a year. Our conversations were usually at quite a clip—PZS was a fast talker, a fidgeter, and a chain smoker—and started out with the three or four bullet points reserved for LBC (as the most active post-left publisher and distributor). Once these topics were passed from his mental cache, he would usually deflate and we could then have a more personal conversation; project work out of the way, it was time to be human. Love, travel, people in common were all treated with the same enthusiasm as the project work but the tone and temperament settled down. Paul's vision of Black Anarchy was like this.

The Beautiful Idea wrought upon the world under black flags and all our unmet friends is the passion we shared with Paul and that he also shared with many other people who I can't otherwise stand. Paul was a bridge between those who toil in the intolerant US and insurgents who live in other, perhaps more fertile, parts of the world. If there were one person who connected us, who didn't get bogged down in the bullshit, and whose heart was big enough to contain multitudes, it was Paul.

This memorial to Paul Z Simons begins with four remembrances, ours; a piece by his eldest daughter, Nina; one by his partner at the time of his death, Lili, and finally a political genealogy by Jason McQuinn, long-term partner and publisher with Paul, through CAL Press.

This selection of texts by Paul is nowhere near comprehensive. We decided this volume should stand with Paul's bigger and more important texts. His contributions to the zine and book *Black Eye* (Ardent, 2015) are not included as they are already in book form. A lot of his work for *Anarchy: A Journal of Desire Armed* falls under the category of minor work, that is, zine and book reviews that are fewer than a couple hundred words. During the AJODA period (late 90s) Paul was interested in history. In that section of the book are his pieces contextualizing the New Model Army and The Paris Commune for an anarchist audience. In *Modern Slavery* (edited by Jason McQuinn over the past five years) is material that mostly discusses American history, including pieces about slave uprisings and the Civil War period. In this section is also what might be Paul's magnum opus, "Illegalism.," covering material close to the heart of any anarchist who appreciates criminal anarchy more than sitting in meetings and developing five-point plans. Finally, that section includes an article about one of Paul's secret pleasures: horror films.

Over the past several years, writing under the name El Errante, Paul traveled the globe and gave compelling stories to a US audience about Rojava, Brazil, Greece, and France. All of those dispatches are included here.

Finally is everything else. Paul and I shared a disposition towards feuds. Rather than engaging in the scrum that is internet fighting, he focused by writing a couple of incisive essays on some of the more significant conflicts. He defends Hakim Bey and Sam Dolgoff and attacks the excesses of antifa (especially of the fascism-is-everything/everything-is-fascism variety). He tells more stories of illegalism, King Mob, and anarchists. Most

importantly there are two essays in this section that are required reading for modern anarchists who are closer to post-left anarchy than to the Spanish Civil War. "Pure Black: An Emerging Consensus" is Paul's expression of his recent political development. It is his articulation of post-left anarchy tweny years later and anarcho-nihilism read through an internationalist perspective. "On Form and Content in *Elements of Refusal*" is the best review and sendup of John Zerzan's book. Say what you will about John but this book is the correction needed on the Marxist vision of the world, whether by state communists, the ultra-left, or the Situationist International.

It is worth noting that most of the texts in this collection are also available at the URL https://theanarchistlibrary.org/category/author/paul-z-simons

Finally, let us end this by saying that we miss Paul now and always. Authentic bridges are few and far, and his enthusiasm (with its obligatory opposite, deep sadness) and commitment to ideas and people and learning, are also far too rare.

PS: (It seems rude not to talk to him about this book...)

Honoring the Life of Paul Simons

Nina Simons

My dad liked to joke that he was born an illegal, to Ginger, an unwed mother in Utah in 1960. He became a uniquely intelligent writer, traveler, idealist, and a fire-breathing anarchist.

My father was a man of profound conviction to his ideals and beliefs; he refused to live by anyone else's rules, he would not be domesticated. He was free in ways that most people cannot even comprehend, and even fewer are brave enough to pursue. He believed that freedom was to live and to demonstrate the truest expression of oneself; that to live by the expectations of society or any authority was to relinquish one's freedom. In this he was uncompromising. In this, he became one of the most accepting individuals I've ever known. My father was the kind of person who would never judge you for living your truth, he was the kind of father who taught me to wish on stars as a child, and that it doesn't matter which star, because putting your intentions into the universe is meaningful and you should never be afraid to ask. When I was a teenager, struggling to find acceptance for who I was, he taught me mindfulness and meditation and also about punk rock. I could tell him anything; he thought that, regardless of gender, the first time someone gets laid, they deserve a cake.

As an adult, he taught me to be a global citizen, to truly listen, to travel with an open heart and an open mind. He made a conscious effort to see the truth in the experiences of others, and encouraged boundless

desire, play, and the expression of conscience for all he encountered.

Many fathers believe it is their duty to protect their children from the harsh realities of the world. My dad was quite the opposite. He believed in exposing us to the evils of the world—through film, literature, protest, and humor—so that we would know them and rage against them.

My dad always had great timing. The only time in my life I was hospitalized, he happened to be flying into town that afternoon. By the evening he was in the ER, hugging me and telling me everything would be alright. When I was going to Ecuador and wanted to stay longer then my group, but had no one to travel with, he didn't miss a beat; "I'll go with you" and he met me in Banos. So that summer of 2015 we traveled through Ecuador together, and he exemplified his adventurous spirit to me time and again. He had a magic about him when he was traveling. He loved to see the world through the eyes of others, and show others the world through his eyes. When he was traveling, he was truly at peace. He was at his best when he was able to be spontaneous and free.

One of my best memories of that trip was of the days in Cuenca, a southern colonial town rich with historical and modern art. We came upon a small art museum called the Center for Prohibited Culture. Admission was $1. We went inside and found a glorious collection of gothic and morbid art. We immediately felt right at home. We got to know the curator—a young man with one arm named Anamorphosis. He told us the that the majority of the art was done by his father, who also had a tattoo shop nearby. We gladly accepted his invitation to take us there. We weaved through alleys in light rain,

down narrow corridors and up rickety stairs. My dad spoke to Anamorphosis about anarchy, with which he was already familiar, and promised to send him copies of his magazine, *Modern Slavery*.

He was an adventurous and playful soul, who met friends and brothers everywhere he went.

I feel very lucky to have had my dad around frequently in the last few years of his life. We traveled together, and he often visited me in my home in Portland, and sometimes brought friends from the anarchist community to stay as well. There were times in my life when he was not so present, when, as his child, I longed for him to be closer, to understand him. I'm not sure I'll ever fully understand him, but those memories of our time together will be with me always, as I'm sure each of you holds cherished memories of the time you spent with my dad as well. As he would say "it's the never forgetting that counts."

My father accomplished a lot in the short life he was given. His legacy includes the immense effort he put forth to see that needle exchange in Colorado would be legalized, even volunteering to be arrested through civil disobedience to promote the cause. He was a prolific writer for and friend to the anarchist community. My dad fought his whole life for the people of the world to overcome oppression and authoritarian rule, and when he had the opportunity to witness a true revolution of the people, for the people, in Rojava, Syria, he bravely rose to the occasion. He was ahead of the curve in noticing and giving voice to the men and women of the Kurdish rebellion. He believed it was his duty as an anarchist to take part in the revolution first hand, and to show the world that the fabric of authoritarian rule

is fragile, and that we are only as powerless as we are complacent to stop it.

In doing this, he realized his lifelong dream, and in his own words at the memorial of a friend, he described;

> *Having stood on ground with no state in Rojava – I hope you felt a little of what I felt, the beginning of freedom, the birth of a new world that you dreamed.*

In an interview, he once said "if there is to be anything written on my tombstone, let it be conscience over law, always." If there is anything that my father would ask of us who survive him, I think it would be this—do not appeal to the law against your fellow man. Do not bow to authority, because those who seek power over you are your enemy. Always let your conscience be your only authority. Honor the dead, fight like hell for the living.

This was my father's creed.

When my father lost his father, my grandpa, Daryl Simons, he offered this poem at his memorial. Today, I offer it to you in his memory.

Do not go gentle into that good night,
Old age should burn and rave at close of day;
Rage, rage against the dying of the light.
Though wise men at their end know dark is right,
Because their words had forked no lightning they
Do not go gentle into that good night.
Good men, the last wave by, crying how bright
Their frail deeds might have danced in a green bay,
Rage, rage against the dying of the light.
Wild men who caught and sang the sun in flight,
And learn, too late, they grieved it on its way,
Do not go gentle into that good night.
Grave men, near death, who see with blinding sight

Blind eyes could blaze like meteors and be gay,
Rage, rage against the dying of the light.
And you, my father, there on the sad height,
Curse, bless, me now with your fierce tears, I pray.
Do not go gentle into that good night.
Rage, rage against the dying of the light.

Dylan Thomas

My Piece of Paul

Lili

2015. The Oakland Book Fair. I'd barely stepped in US land and I was craving to meet some anarchists there. I must admit that so far I was feeling a little bit disappointed, because I saw a lot of young folks all so serious and sometimes so lefty. Much like some anarchist book fairs in Brazil. When I was about to leave, in a small spot, I saw some older folks. Laughing. It was the Modern Slavery and Anarchy magazine guys, Paul between them. So they told me "tomorrow there will be an anarchist meeting at the Berkeley Campus, it's called The BASTARD Conference."

Next day, there I was. Feeling cheered with all the life that was missing at the previous day. At some point I met the same laughing folks from Modern Slavery and Anarchy magazine. We had more time to talk, and I told them about my previous work on cannibalism and cannibal movies. Jason stopped me and said there was somebody I needed to talk to.

By that time Paul was working on a piece about Cannibal Holocaust. What were the odds!? Another anarchist into cannibalism/cannibal movies?! Besides that, he was smoking at the campus, which I found lovely, since Berkeley seems to have turned into California Uber Alles picture. From that time I knew there was no turning back.

For the last almost three years Paul was a regular and intense part of my life. Luckily we are not Christians, so there's no need to turn him into a saint. Life with him was intense, not always good, not always bad.

He was too much. He had too much love and too much hate. He was completely generous and sometimes completely selfish. Living with him was the best of times, and the worst of times. When he was writing, at least since I've known him, he was in some of his best times.

He left a mark in every place he went. One of the most amazing things I learned about Paul was his capacity to find something in common with almost everybody. And he was never pretending about it. He could almost always find a way to relate to people.

Paul was raised in a Mormon family, and even being so different from this part of his family he would find a way to relate to them. There were no awkward meetings when we were together. On a personal level, he talked about the politics he believed in a way that people could relate to, although on the internet he sounded less open to other people thinking. He could bring some of the most different people together. And that was, for sure, one of the most important things he added to my life. Through him I met and got closer to some of the best people I know. In US, in France, and in Greece.

He was a drop out. He took me with him and opened to me new worlds and new roads. I went to the US by myself, but he showed me things and places that I would never have found alone. In one of our trips in the country he drove us from Ohio to California just to arrive in time to have a thanksgiving meal with our LBC friends, which he cooked. He was also a great cook (and an awful cleaner). On our roadtrips he would help me with my reading, sing (I loved his singing), show me for the first time in my life a snow storm, in Chicago (where we met some of the rudest people. An old woman called us "ugly, ugly!" because we were smoking a cigarette

on the sidewalk).

There he would show me the monuments for the Haymarket Martyrs and also (my friend) Emma's grave (I have a special fondness for Emma). He was particularly interested in martyrs' graves and monuments. Everywhere he went he looked for martyrs' graves, and during each of his presentations about Rojava, talking about the martyrs was always was the moment when he would weep.

He knew a lot about history, and learned almost all on his own. He was a history encyclopedia. Maybe all of this knowledge also made him a little bit (too) paranoid. But who can blame him? Knowing what the US government did to our former anarchist comrades, to the Black Panther Party, and also how the US government gave money and technological support to dictatorships in South America... It wouldn't surprise me to find that what sounded like paranoia in what he said turns out to be entirely correct.

He hated the academic world (even though it was part of my world, and he supported me) but he loved to do research and write. Sometimes he thought about turning his research into a novel or something (he always—I mean, since I met him—presented himself as a writer or a journalist). He was also an avid reader and a movie lover (especially, as noted, horror ones).

His last research was about South America dictatorships. He investigated while in Chile and, in his last two months, in Paraguay. He was, of course, horrified to understand how naturally it happened, how ordinary people supported all the torture and surveillance, how one would willingly snitch on a neighbor or a lover, just because... And even within this horror, he found time to

make friends, to know interesting people, and to leave his mark on them. His interest in horror movies was also connected with his desire to understand and fight against the horror in life.

Paul couldn't settle in just one place. Before he was out of money he would come and go from Brazil. The first time he was here, we went on a Brazilian tour. He also seemed to be in the right place at the right time. When he came to Brazil the first time, an impeachment was in process. Brazil was partly dressed in red (to support the former president), partly dressed with the flag colors (green and yellow). In Salvador, Bahia State, we decided to go to the beach. We were both clueless that day. We started walking and in a few minutes we were in the middle of the patriot crowd. He decided to do some interviews. The first guy he was talking to (with me translating) started to say awful things about women (because the former president was a woman). I couldn't hold myself and I started arguing with the guy. Paul took me away from the crowd and, laughing, said: "Are you crazy? We are going to be lynched here. Besides I'm a yankee [pejorative term for US Americans], what do you thing these patriots will do with us? Remember we are 'journalists'."

Paul went to Rojava, to Europe, to South America, to Mexico, to Vietnam, and a lot of other places that I don't even know about. It was his choice to live like this, but it didn't come without some suffering too. Paul had five kids and he was crazy about them. He was always telling me and other people how amazing his kids were. Even when he disagreed with their choices, he was proud of how they were making their own choices. And he cheered every new achievement they had. All of

them. I felt that if he had any regret in life, it was not being present all the time for his kids. From time to time it would made him very sad. But that was the life he chose.

Paul himself was most of the time a big kid. He would tell stupid jokes, and also some refined ones (which I did not always get, partly because of the language, partly because of cultural differences). He would take me to dance in the middle of the afternoon. He would untie my shoes when I had busy hands. He would make a (big) mess. He would write some poems, help me with my awful English, give money (when he had it) to friends in need or just to celebrate. And he also appreciated the good things in life, good food, good places, nice hotels (where he would always leave something behind). Paul was this and more. He was too much, too much to ever forget.

Paul had a full life. He felt in love so many times, had more than a few kids of his own and embraced some other people's kids. He got into a lot of trouble. He made a lot of good friends. I was just a tiny piece in his life, but he is huge in mine.

Paul, Paul Richard Simons, Paul Z. Simons, PZS, El Errante, Paulo, Pablo, Pablito. He was all of it. And he still is, because there's no way to delete his presence from the lives of some of us.

April 14th, 2018

Paul Z. Simons—
You'll Always Be with Us

Jason McQuinn

Like any and every participant in radical rebellion around the world PZS has his own story. And although each of us are ultimately unique, each of us can see important parts of her or his life in Paul's life, just as Paul could and did see important parts of his life in ours. Yet, though I knew Paul at least as well as most of his other friends and comrades, he always remained a mystery to me in as many ways as he was open and transparent. I can speak here, thus, only from my own perspective—with all its contours, horizons, and limits.

Even many of those who never experienced the 1960s directly, have been influenced to their core by the spirit and battles of the anti-war movements, the black, student, women's, gay and sexual liberation movements, as well as by the alternative—and especially the radical—cultures and press of the time. In the U.S. these all constituted a large part of a period of intense social contestation the high-water mark of which was reached in the early 1970s, but with tides and currents that continue their work to subvert and erode the dominant systems of hierarchical institutions and capitalist accumulation on up to the present. Beyond the great battles and explosions like the events in Paris in 1968, the Hot Autumn in Italy in 1969, and the mass protests and riots that shook most major—as well as many minor—cities throughout North America, one of the most significant effects of that surge was the re-emergence,

crystallization, and reconstitution of an increasingly confident, critical, and visible worldwide anarchist milieu. This may never have had the coherence and power that could claim to be a worldwide movement, but definitely and increasingly staked out territories, launched projects and did not hesitate to fight for its life—and our lives—wherever possible.

As a child of the 1960s, this is where the Paul I knew showed up and made his own mark, not once or twice, but repeatedly through decades of the anarchist resurgence. After making his way from a Utah Mormon upbringing to the great capitalist empire city of New York, Paul was an eager and energetic—and ever critically defiant—participant in the Anarchist Switchboard, local squats, and other projects, all culminating for him with the in-your-face *Black Eye* zine (collected in *Black Eye*, Ardent Press, 2015) and the battle for Tompkins Square Park that raged on the Lower East Side and dominated radical attention at the end of the 1980s. His bios always included the quote: "My proudest moment was participating in the Tompkins Square Riot. I found out what freedom and democracy were made of—in an instant."

But he didn't stop there. Paul was always ready to meet, associate, and scrimmage with just about any of the more (or occasionally less) interesting and promising elements of the milieu. As an anarchist, he was riotously post-left, anti-work, and anti-civ, but at the same time a card-carrying member of the now staid-to-the-point-of-conservatism IWW! In *Anarchy* #43 he wrote a critique titled "Rare Praise; or Bookchin Hates Us (and... that's a good thing)"! But he later severely abated his critiques of Murray Bookchin's recuperative city-statism and bludgeoning anarcho-stalinist tendencies amidst the re-

cent, latter-day Öcalan-Bookchin love-fest in Rojava! So it shouldn't be surprising that he unabashedly celebrates eclecticism as "a virtue,...desired and cultivated, a political gesture itself in an era of heterogeneity" in his introduction to the *Black Eye* anthology. Who else could write so well on everything from the New Model Army to the Paris Commune & the Situationists, the abolitionists and slave rebellions to the illegalists? Not to mention his excursions into the Grand-Guignol or (one of his favorite films) Cannibal Holocaust... and keep us asking for more?

For me, Paul was a both a good friend and a committed, long-time comrade in our common projects: *Anarchy* magazine (for those in the know, AJODA—"A Journal of Desire Armed"), the *Modern Slavery* journal, and the CAL Press book projects. (He was especially proud of his "Afterword Commentary" on John Zerzan's *Elements of Refusal*, still a giant of a book for contemporary radicals!) But beyond this—and for most of us—he was more importantly a captivating writer with a voracious interest in every facet of the anarchist milieu, its literature & culture, its history, and especially its empirical diversity right now throughout the world in all its struggles and celebrations. Not only interested, he was emotionally invested with each person he met, no matter the language, place, or anarchic dialect spoken! Those who saw any of his prolific presentations covering his brief but revealing visit to Rojava will not forget the tears in his eyes during his recollections. Wherever he went—New York, Oakland, Paris, São Paulo, Los Angeles, Athens, or Kobane—Paul always made quick friends, and enjoyed putting himself to work at whatever local projects were ongoing, making heartfelt connections while gently contributing his critically internationalist perspective.

Paul's path to post-left anarchist critique and analysis always seemed to begin from his readings of the early Frankfurt School theorists. Despite the later foundering of their project due to some of their own presuppositions, the works of Max Horkheimer and Theodor Adorno, and especially their *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, always remained touchstones for him. Their associate, Herbert Marcuse (*Reason and Revolution*: *Hegel and the Rise of Social Theory*), also loomed large in Paul's thoughts. Jacques Camatte (along with other Italian ultra-left communists) was another constant inspiration with his analysis of the real domination of capital and critique of the organization as gang and racket. On the North American scene Paul always gave credit to Fredy Perlman and John Zerzan for their pioneering work—both, not surprisingly, former Marxists. And the Situationist International, Guy Debord and Raoul Vaneigem, et al, were always somewhere in the mix. But what really made Paul's writings so frequently intriguing and important for us was the huge amount of historical perspective and detail at his command. For if Paul were interested in anything more than critical theory and critical self-theory (or as he preferred to emphasize, self-critical theory or self-critical theory), it was the vast history of human resistance, insurrection, and revolution—in any and every sphere of human activity. This obviously included the world of culture and the arts, as his constant fascination with deviant art and artistic deviance readily reveals.

My own traverse to post-left anarchist critique started from an isolated and fairly naïve exploration of anarchist theory and history—and from an always anti-Marxian perspective. But I could also perceive the

siren appeal of the ultra-left, with its sometimes-almost-anarchist conclusions, which led me to value greatly every one of the same writers and theorists that Paul so loved (well, maybe not the Italian ultra-left communist Bordiga, since I've never actually gotten around to reading him). This may be the most important reason our partnership in publishing lasted so many years. Paul always kept me honest in acknowledging the contributions of the deviant Marxist marginals (not that I ever wanted to slight them, except to the extent that most of them never made it completely out of the ideological swamps they often too-long intentionally inhabited). For that—I think both Paul and I always agreed—we need an unflinchingly anarchist field of critique and activity. As Paul of late put it, less and less the old black & red or red & black combinations that have led to repeated recuperation and self-defeat, instead we—the international milieu and would-be movement—might be turning more and more to a pure black anarchism. At least that was the direction Paul was leaning, though he was certainly also aware there is no purity anywhere.

I will always remember our talks when Paul would knock on the door at any time of the day or night after hundreds of miles of travel from far-away jumping-off points. Strong coffee or espresso was the rule at any hour. (Paul never slept much, or at least for very long.) He avoided alcohol, but his nicotine habit could be disconcerting at times, often making it impossible to carry on long conversations without a number of tobacco breaks. But off we would go on the latest events and ideas, books and authors, which also meant I'd always have to produce the latest additions to my library, or the latest books shipped in for possible review, some of which he'd choose

for closer study that night and into the next day or days. Unfortunately, those visits will be no more.

Despite earlier interludes of heroin use and the inevitable withdrawal from social activity that usually ensues, Paul not only hung on but reoriented much of his activity post-millennium, to life-saving projects like needle exchanges, substance-abuse counseling and harm reduction training—including projects in New York, Denver, Hanoi, and L.A.

At the same time, as have many enemies of the state, Paul conducted his own war with the IRS, attempting to at least deprive the state of his own pound of flesh (when it wasn't possible to simply be done with the state altogether). This, along with increasing surveillance and border harassment, led Paul to give up on life in the US in the last couple years. He preferred semi-stateless expatriate wanderings amongst the squats, communes, and other anarchic spaces to life back in the center of the empire. The journey ended in Paraguay.

Currently, many if not most, will know Paul primarily from his El Errante writings of the last few years, as they appeared on anarchistnews.org (as well as on the *Modern Slavery* site). These began with descriptions of his excursion from Turkey into Rojava, not long after the defeat of ISIS in Kobane, Syria by the Kurdish forces—many with revolutionary aspirations at the time, and continuing with his international wanderings to Paris and Athens and São Paulo. But to get a better, more complete picture of the man, his life and his vision, just begin following the pages that follow.

June 2018

Anarchy: a journal of desire armed

A True Account of the New Model Army

1995

Revolutions have generally required some form of military activity; and military activity, in turn, generally implies an army or something like one. Armies, however, have traditionally been the offspring of the revolution, impinging little on the revolutionary politics that animate them. History provides numerous examples of this, but perhaps the most poignant is the exception that proves the rule. Recall the extreme violence with which rebellious Kronstadt was snuffed out by Bolshevism's Finest, the Red Guards. The lesson in the massacre of the sailors and soldiers is plain, armies that defy the "institutional revolution" can expect nothing but butchery. The above statements, however, are generalizable solely to modernity, that is to say, only to the relatively contemporary era wherein the assumption that armies derive their mandate from the nation-state; and the nation-state in turn derives its mandate from "the people." Prior to the hegemony of such assumptions, however, there is a stark and glaring example of an army that to a great degree was the revolution. Specifically an army that pushed the revolution as far as it could, an army that was the forum for the political development of the revolution, an army that sincerely believed that it could realize heaven on earth. Not a revolutionary army by any means, rather an army of revolutionaries, regicides, fanatics and visionaries. The Revolution is English (ca 1645–1653) and the name of this army is the New Model Army.

The Set Up

The English Revolution began as most early modern revolutions began, with the clash of a restive, self-confident middle class and an incompetent (if not blatantly stupid) monarch. Charles I had, almost from the outset of his reign, done everything wrong. In a country that had seen almost a century of unrest and bloodshed centering around the question of anglicanism versus Catholicism, Charles married a papist. Worse, laws against catholics went unenforced while puritan ministers were being tortured, thrown into prison and publicly reviled. The final religious insult came when Archbishop Laud began to reintroduce ceremony into the anglican faith in direct contradiction to the simple dignity that the puritans demanded from their services. The re-institution of the railed altar in all churches led to scattered rioting that inevitably included the destruction of the hated "romish" rails. It was all too much for the godly and, significantly, such "popish" provocations often drove puritans to the far left of religious heresy, in an effort to break all ties with established religion (Cromwell fits into this category). The religious question, however, was only half of what rankled the gentry.

By 1629, it had become obvious to Charles and the royalists that Parliament, and particularly the House of Commons, was developing into something little better than an elected rabble. In March of that year, after several stormy sessions and in spite of repeated pleas and threats by Charles, the Commons had refused to grant the traditional tariff guarantees for the monarchy (tunnage and poundage). In retaliation Charles decided to dissolve the body. The radicals realized that years

might elapse before a new Parliament would be summoned so they decided to close the final session with a demonstration of their displeasure with the crown. On the day that Parliament received the order of adjournment as the Speaker was preparing to rise and end the session, Benjamin Valentine and Denzil Holies rushed forward and held him forcibly in his seat, effectively keeping Parliament in session. The Commons erupted, a rush was made to set the Speaker free, a counter-rush was made to lock the door. Swords were drawn and oaths exchanged, the radicals gained the upper hand and Holies read out the charges; that anyone seeking to introduce innovations into the Church of England or trying to establish tunnage and poundage or any other tax without the consent of Parliament was to be counted an enemy of the kingdom and a betrayer of its liberties. The chamber resounded to cries of, "Aye! Aye!" The doors were flung open and the members burst out into the midst of an armed force that Charles had assembled to put the "uprising" down. Another Parliament would not be called by Charles for eleven years. And as one might expect, this time it was the Commons' turn.

The Long Parliament assembled in November of 1640, and from the beginning it was obvious that its members had their own agenda; Archbishop Laud was immediately impeached and imprisoned (and later executed), all royal taxes were suspended and political prisoners of the crown were released and compensated. In addition, a scathing indictment of Charles's policy was adopted by the Commons, the so-called Grand Remonstrance. In response to such provocation, Charles brought a body of armed men into the House in an attempt to have five members of the opposition arrested.

As it turned out, Charles was no better at a simple arrest than he was at running the country; the five had been warned well beforehand and had taken refuge in the City of London. Resolutions of support poured in from all over the country and Charles was forced to leave for the relative safety of the north of England.

The New Model Army

The next four years are characterized by desultory attempts at negotiation between Charles and the Commons, and of course, Civil War. While the situation in the countryside proved to be fluid, generally Charles held the north and southwest of the country, while support for Parliament was strongest in the midlands, the Home Counties and London. The battles and lines of support raged back and forth across the country, Charles never really having enough support to win any major engagements and Parliament never having the will to press home its advantage. For all intents and purposes, a stalemate punctuated by occasional bloodletting.

In the fall of 1644, things were looking particularly grim for the supporters of Parliament. The Earl of Essex and his entire army had been cut off and forced to surrender in Lostwithiel in September. The indecisive Battle of Newbury (25 October) had strengthened the arguments of those calling for the elimination of half-hearted officers and a more unified command. Oliver Cromwell, a silent backbencher prior to the conflict, and by 1644 one of the preeminent military commanders, was particularly hot on this topic. He argued forcefully for some kind of new army to meet and defeat the royalists once and for all. He stated in Parliament that the gloomy argument used by Henry Montague to avoid

battle at Donnington, "If we fight a hundred times and beat him ninety-nine, he will be king still... But if he beats us but once, or the last time, we shall be hanged," was a sure indication that without an army dedicated to victory, the war would be lost. What was needed was something different, an army of fanatics, razors; men with a religious zeal to win. Cromwell, in a speech to Parliament on 9 December, makes the case plainly, "till the whole army were new modelled...they must not expect any notable success in anything they were about." Much to Cromwell's later chagrin, he got exactly what he asked for, in the New Model Army.

The formation of the New Model Army is inextricably linked with the Self-Denying Ordinance, which prohibited peers and members of Parliament their previous military commissions. The act of self-denial signaled an attempt to break cleanly with the past and to form a wholly revolutionary institution. It is also interesting to note that this split between Parliament and the Army effectively created two sources of power in the country (not counting Charles). This was not lost on many members of Parliament and soon the Commons had split into two factions, "Presbyterians" and "Independents," read conservatives and radicals. It is also important to remember that the one thing that fueled this split and the subsequent clashes across the benches was the simple existence of this entity.

What They Believed

It is difficult to describe the level of fanaticism and zeal associated with Parliamentary forces at this time. Cromwell was one of the first military commanders to actively recruit and train religious non-conformists. His Eastern

Association, prior to the formation of the New Model, was considered by its soldiers to be a union of the "godly" and Independents of all stripe joined in large numbers. Cromwell; once questioned about promoting an Anabaptist to a captaincy, replied, "The state in choosing men to serve them takes no notice of their opinions. If they be willing faithfully to serve...that satisfies." Such sentiments, however, were considered dangerous to the point of sedition by the stolid presbyterian property holders in London and elsewhere, who regarded Anabaptists as holding religious and social views that could potentially damn the souls of innocent bystanders.

Perhaps the best indicator of the intensity of the feeling of these men is by examining their views of battle. Cromwell is probably a poor barometer for this kind of measurement; the man was almost always exhilarated to the point of frenzy by battle. Yet after leading his Eastern Association into the Battle of Marston Moor (July 1644) he came away convinced that this army was the instrument of God on earth. He was also convinced that it had been established to defeat the Anti-Christ (Charles). Another example, in a mopping-up operation fought during July of 1645 near Langport in Somerset, a group of outnumbered royalists had taken up a commanding position on a hill which could only be approached by a lane wide enough for four horses abreast. The Royalists were swept from the hill and to the "godly" officers of the New Model there could be but a single explanation for such a victory. As he watched the royalists break, Colonel Thomas Harrison, an Independent, "with a loud voice [broke] forth into the praises of God with fluent expressions, as if he had been in a rapture." Cromwell, not to be out done by a colonel, concluded upon witness-

ing the same site, "To see this, is it not to see the face of God?" Clearly, a very different Army than the coterie of professional soldiers and peers that had fought prior to the formation of the New Model.

It should come as no surprise then that men who held such different religious views should be forced to tolerate each other's idiosyncracies. This necessity for toleration crept slowly into other aspects of the men's lives as well, particularly when it came to their political beliefs. As shown above, the Army, almost from its inception, had been a hothouse for radical religious ideas and even more radical men. These radicals were often made chaplains and their preaching extended beyond Army listeners to include civilian worshipers. As the military campaign gathered steam, the linkage between religious and political radicalism became even more pronounced. The Bible, once the font of an individual's personal religious learning and comfort, became a signpost on the road to a new world. This new world differs vastly from the ravings of current religious fanatics, it is a world where there are no more peers, a world of social equality and religious tolerance. While some of the chaplains merely expressed the need for limitations on personal holdings, there were others expressing infinitely more dangerous sentiments, including programs to "level" society, incipient republicanism and even regicide. As the New Model tramped back and forth across the country rooting out Royalists, sermons on such topics were preached to both soldier and citizen alike.

What They Did

The New Model fought a single significant engagement during this period, the Battle of Naseby (14 June, 1645)

at which Royalist forces were decisively routed. After a year of cleaning the countryside of latent or active royalists the job of the Army appeared to have been pretty much accomplished. So just when the New Model should have been exiting the stage of history, things started to heat up.

As the military prowess of the Army and the incipient radicalism of its soldiers became known to presbyterian members of Parliament they began laying plans to eliminate it. In the spring of 1647 Parliament tried to disband a part of the Army and to send the rest off to Ireland. This deal also left a great part of the soldiers unpaid for services rendered. The final insult came when Parliament refused to pass an act of indemnity to protect soldiers from legal consequences for acts committed during the war. That was as far as the Army was willing to be pushed. Reunited by a long list of grievances and fueled by almost two years of increasingly radical influences, the New Model would rise and set things straight.

The Army elected Agitators, two per company, starting with the cavalry. Plans were drawn up for a march on London and ultimately Parliament itself. All troops wore a red ribbon on their shirt sleeves symbolizing solidarity, even to death. The Generals, Cromwell and Thomas Fairfax, were at a loss as to how to deal with these malcontents. Lilburne, a leading Agitator, derisively wrote later that "all or most of the officers sat like so many drones and snakes." After a fair amount of dithering, however, most of the officers were drawn into the plot. The Agitators called upon Cromwell and Fairfax to arrange a general rendezvous, otherwise, "we—shall be necessitated...to do such things ourselves."

On 3 June, 1647, just one day before the general ren-

dezvous, Cornet Joyce was sent, in an action initiated by the Agitators and approved by Cromwell, to seize the king from Parliament and place him fully under Army control. Joyce and a company of 500 cavalrymen visited the king twice at Holmby House; the second time he was persuaded to come away with them. When the king demanded to know under what authority he was being taken away, Joyce gestured around to the soldiers and said, "All commanded."

With Charles as its prisoner, and the Agitators in complete control of the situation, the Engagement of 5 June 1647 established an Army Council,"to consist of those general officers of the Army who have concurred with the Army...with two commission officers and two soldiers to be chosen from each regiment." In one document the Agitators had replaced hierarchy with equality and martial discipline with mutual trust. The sequel to this rendezvous shows how deeply feeling in the Army had run against some of the officers. The troops, "hooted divers officers out of the field, unhorsed some and rent their clothes and beat them...Officers at that time being only admitted by mutual consent, they could have no power but what was betrusted to them by the soldiers." After this display, the Army vowed to a man, "not to willingly disband nor divide" until all their grievances had been answered. The New Model then set off for London, where in the Levellers they had allies, and in Parliament they had a score to settle.

The Army occupied London on 4 August and the eleven presbyterian members of Parliament, whom the Army had proposed impeachment for, fled and did not return. Divisions between the Army, Cromwell and some of the other Independents, however, began to arise

at this time. Cromwell and some of the Generals had entered into negotiations with the king. These negotiations had produced a document, The Heads of Proposals, which, among other things, contemplated a limited monarchy. In response, the Agitators, in collusion with some of the London Levellers drew up the Agreement of the People, a document wholly founded on democratic principles. The two factions, Generals and Agitators met to thrash out their differences at St. Mary's Church, Putney, on the outskirts of London. These debates are perhaps one of the most remarkable collisions of two separate and competing views of political franchise and power in the English language, Cromwell and his brother-in-law Ireton arguing the conservative case and Colonels Rainsborough and Sexby arguing the radical. Cromwell dwells on the need for property ("a fixed interest in the kingdom") in order to be guaranteed the vote while Rainsborough insists that the "poorest he that lives" must be given a say in political affairs. The debates ended inconclusively and in turn laid the groundwork for the king's escape from Hampton Court on 11 November to the Isle of Wight. The New Model soon found itself back in the field and the importance of the debates was lost in the need to defeat the king's supporters once again.

Disillusion and disappointment ran deep, both among the Agitators and Levellers. One Leveller pamphlet published in 1648 spelled out in no uncertain terms the radical view of what had happened, "The ground of the late war between the King and you [Parliament] was a contest whether he or you should exercise the supreme power over us." And in a similar, more bitter vein, a pamphlet from 1649 simply asked, "Is not all the

controversy, whose slaves the poor shall be?"

The summer and fall of 1647 had taught Cromwell and Fairfax a number of lessons, not the least of which was the need to keep the Army radical but not radicalized. They henceforth took responsibility for most of the Army's initiatives, never again allowing it to move ahead of them as had happened in the spring of 1647. The New Model, during the remainder of the revolution, was used as a pawn in the political realm. Although it did accomplish some of its more radical goals, like purging Parliament for good of the presbyterians (Pride's Purge, 6 September 1648) and realizing the execution of the king (30 January, 1649).

Where They Went

The Army, however, would be the training ground for a new kind of agitator; out of the New Model, after its successes and ultimate defeat, came a wave of millenarian, Utopian preachers. These included a whole host of Ranters, Quakers (prior to the sects renunciation of war), Diggers, Fifth Monarchy Men and others. Many of these radicals had either been in the New Model or had been associated as civilians with it. In a sense these itinerants learned much of their confrontational style from the New Model. Their dialogue is crowded with argument brought into relief by scriptural counterpoint, their combative style is vintage New Model. An excellent example of these new preachers is Abiezer Coppe, who had served in the New Model and then drifted into Ranterism. Coppe describes himself as "charging so many coaches, so many hundreds of men and women of the greater rank, in the open streets, with my hand stretched out, my hat cocked up... gnashing my teeth

at some of them and day and night with a loud voice proclaiming the day of Lord throughout London and Southwark. [This was, he admitted], strange carriage..." It also makes one wonder about Coppe's days in the New Model—try to imagine this guy with a sword...

One question remains, what of the radicals from the New Model after 1660, after defeat. Some clearly made accommodations with the new political climate. Cornet Joyce, the king's kidnapper, became a colonel in his son's army and a land speculator to boot. Sexby, the former Agitator involved in the debate at Putney, became a conspirator in touch with royalist circles. But these do not tell the full story. Many of the radicals fled to the New World. There are verified historical reports of Ranter meetings on Long Island as late as 1690. It appears, and the scholarship in this field is just beginning to be done, that many old soldiers found their way to Jamaica and the Caribbean. In this arena many of these men turned again to political radicalism and some found their way to privateering and piracy. In 1660 there was a mutiny in Jamaica led by an ex-officer in the New Model. At this time most of Jamaica's wealth came from privateering, which "old standers and officers of Cromwell's army" participated in and profited from. Many piratical codes of conduct also seem to derive from New Model forms; the election of the captain, the absolute equality of shares and risk, and finally the consensus required prior to pursuing a prize. In only one instance do we find a direct link, however, between the pirates and the New Model. Henry Morgan's brutal raid on Panama in 1671 was said to have been carried out by "troops [dressed] in the faded red coats of the New Model Army."

Conclusion

I find the New Model Army a fascinating piece of insurrectionary history. Not just because of the relative antiquity of the English Revolution and the concomitant progressive nature of the debates that the Army engaged in. Nor is it the extreme tolerance practiced by the men for each other's very personal beliefs concerning religion and politics. I think it is more centered around the final Utopian goals of the soldiers, and their drawing of the political and military battlefield in shades of pure black and white, of absolute good and total evil. The New Model was an army self-assured, confident and certain of its final goal. The fact that it eventually became a pawn for the Generals speaks more for the subterfuge of the powerful than it does to the corruptibility of the men.

I leave the New Model where I found it, red uniforms flashing in the rising sun, the clank of steel being unsheathed and the whinny of a nervous mount carrying through the calm morning air. In the distance one can hear the final benediction before battle, "Lord give us thy strength to crush yet another regiment of thy enemies, may they fall before thy soldiers' swords like wheat...."

The Paris Commune: a critical history

The international revolutionary movement, as set in motion over a century ago by the western proletariat, failed. Its so-called 'victories' and 'defeats;' if judged in the light of their historical consequences, tend to confirm Liebknecht's remark, the day before his assassination, that some 'defeats are really victories, while some victories are more shameful than any defeats.' Thus the first great failure' of workers' power, the Pans Commune, is in fact its first great success, whereby the primitive proletariat proclaimed its historical capacity to organize all aspects of social life freely.

Theoreticians who examine the history of this movement... can easily prove that the Commune was objectively doomed to failure and could not have been realized. They forget that for those who lived it, the realization was already there.

Guy Debord, Attila Kotanyi, Raoul Vaneigem,
Theses on the Paris Commune, 18 March, 1962

One must realize that in an insurrection no quarter must be expected and consequently none must be given. The insurrectionists must burn their boats from the start so that they are left with one choice only: victory or death. Have no regard for public opinion or for persons or property; bear only one thought in mind: the ends justify the means. Our objectives are too lofty, the interests involved too important, the risks too great and the responsibility too serious; the heroes who engage in this titanic

struggle must not be swayed by any considerations that might hinder their success. All sentimentality is treason.

Gustave-Paul Cluseret Civil Delegate for War (3 April-1 May, 1871) The Paris Commune

An enlightenment euphemism states that History is philosophy teaching by example. If true then it should come as no surprise that the Paris Commune should be studied by those who seek to realize insurrection; the final and utter destruction of the dominant society, defined by civilization, the commodity and class. In the immediate aftermath of the Commune, commentary from every political viewpoint came thick and fast. Bakunin, Blanqui, Marx, Engels and Kropotkin all wrote essays of varying length and quality commenting on and criticizing various aspects of the event. The brilliant, hitherto republican and anti-clerical historian, Hippolyte Taine, was so angered by the event that he wrote a multiple volume rant in response to the insurrection (*Les Origines de la France Contemporaine*). In the work, Taine blasts French politics, culture, and society for producing circumstances that would lead to the establishment of an insurrectionary regime in Paris, an event he considered one of the most terrible historical aberrations ever visited on a nation-state. Having been converted from republicanism to monarchy, Taine finished his career as an apologist for reaction, though as stated previously, a brilliant one.

In the last decade of the twentieth century a number of new researches were initiated into the Commune. These have included the obligatory post-modernist mumbo-jumbo (The Emergence of Social Space: Rimbaud and the Paris Commune), a quantitative comparison of participation in the June insurrection of 1848 and

the Commune {Insurgent Identities: Class, Community and Protest in Paris from 1848 to the Commune), a smattering of doctoral dissertations and journal articles. Mainstream academics, like fashion designers, revisit and revitalize artifacts and events from the past, as the fall of Eurocommunism precipitated the appearance of numerous studies on the pan-European democratic revolutions of 1848. By way of contrast, there has been a concerted effort on the part of anarchist historians to uncover and present what have been termed "lost histories" by Peter Lamborn Wilson, one of the individuals involved in this endeavor. Though the reasons for these efforts vary, one common motivation has been to provide a sound historical and theoretical foundation for anarchist interventions, present and future. This is one of my justifications for this history of the Commune; friction, not fashion.

The Paris Commune, like various rebellions associated with colonial America, is one of those occurrences that seems to hover at the periphery of insurrectionary consciousness. The importance and salience of the event currently resides in its potential, still latent, for instruction and inspiration. This raises a cautionary note. There is a temptation to portray any given event from insurrectionary history solely as a martyrology. This is particularly so with the Commune, given the savage repression that followed military defeat, and the fact that some of the most impressive insurrectionaries were killed on the barricades. Critical history should steer clear of such maudlin exposition.

The intent of this essay is to provide a critical history of the Paris Commune. Critical history, in this instance, being a chronology of events, and some discussion as

to the ideas that drove the historical actors. As will be seen, many of the ideas that came to the fore in the Commune have a certain amount of resonance with many of the dominant theoretical concepts in the post-industrial anarchist milieu.

Cancan

Instead of moving in unison with the maximum of elegance and grace possible, these dancers invent their own movements... no agreed patterns, no routine, no uniformity: only a storm charge...everybody following their own demon.

-from an article on the cancan in
Revue et Gazette Musicale de Paris

France was (and arguably is) the pre-eminent country of revolution. From 1789 to 1914 not a decade passed that France either teetered on the brink of social war, or was embroiled in the throes of full fledged insurrection. Of even greater concern to the ruling classes, however, was the tendency of revolution, once initiated in France, to transcend national boundaries and kick-start political upheavals in other countries. The February Revolution of 1848 that established the Second Republic began a continent-wide series of insurrections that threatened every established monarchy in Europe, excepting the Romanovs. Of singular importance then to every government in Europe was the maintenance of a suitably authoritarian, reactionary regime in France. From 1851 to 1870 this bill was filled by Napoleon III (a nephew of the original) and his very personal regime, the Second Empire.

Napoleon III came to power as president of the Second Republic, later establishing the Empire and himself as Emperor via a coup d'etat in December of 1851. The

Second Empire is best characterized as a regime of national economic development, not particularly imaginative, given to opulence, big building projects and lethal doses of bourgeois banality. Priority was given in the economy to finance and investment in national public works as opposed to technical industrial development, or commodity market expansion. The economy, as far as it came under imperial planning, presaged both fascist and "New Deal" priorities and forms. There are some excellent reasons for this type of economic tinkering, foremost is mollifying restive proletarians via the provision of employment through massive public work projects. Napoleon III relied upon working class and petit-bourgeois strata to retain power, and, at least during the 1850s, he tried to keep them happy. In order to fund these expenditures Napoleon III allowed for the establishment of large investment groups willing to bankroll risky ventures. Enter the Pereire brothers, who founded Credit Mobilier with the direct assistance of the Emperor in 1852. Credit Mobilier, "the largest gaming house in Europe," was wildly successful, and virtually dominated French finance during the first decade of the Empire. On an initial investment of some sixty million francs the firm was earning profit margins of thirty one million francs by 1855. The old established banking houses, the Rothschilds and the Banque de France in particular, eyed these developments with a mixture of jealousy, fear, and loathing. The Emperor was inundated during the 1850s by pleas from the haute Banque for fiscal restraint, accountability and a sound investment strategy. Finally, in 1861 Napoleon appointed Achille Fould as Finance Minister, a thoroughly suitable candidate to the conservative banking interests. As part of the new Fi-

nance Minister's agenda, public building and municipal development projects were greatly curtailed. Workers all over the country, accustomed to stable employment, and relatively cushy civil service type work found themselves suddenly jobless. Mild approval of the regime by the working classes changed to hostility overnight, and the final decade of the Empire is characterized by a rising tide of militancy, agitation, strikes, and finally, the Commune. As if to bring this Imperial financial circus to an appropriate conclusion, Credit Mobilier crashed spectacularly in 1867, taking scores of investors and a vast sum of cash with it.

The 1860s became a decade of social ferment and upheaval. Nobody seemed to be very happy, liberal reforms were demanded by right-wing monarchist deputies in the legislature, strikes of unparalleled duration and violence occurred in almost every manufacturing sector. During the years 1869-1870 the strike movement reached a crescendo, with workers walking out of factories in Aubin, Le Mans, AIbi, Lyon, Marseille, Rouen and Le Creusot. The strike at the steel mill at Le Creusot was particularly violent. Owned by Eugene Schneider, supremely wealthy and powerful, the French Carnegie and a member of the legislature, steel workers had walked out in the fall of 1869 over wage cuts. Collisions between strikers, strike breakers and gendarmes began almost immediately and Schneider was forced to request army intervention twice. The second time, in March of 1870, was truly ominous with the entire town joining the strikers in a concerted action that to all observers looked more like an insurrection than a strike. A full brigade of regular army troops with two commanding generals were required to quell the disturbance. Sig-

nificant also were the demands that the strikers made, which included both pay increases as well as the right to hold public meetings and free speech. Some strikers went further, demanding the re-establishment of republican government, quite obviously over the corpse of the Second Empire.

One of the mainstays of Imperial social control had been complete press censorship. This had driven many journals out of existence or into exile. Those journals that remained simply steered clear of political editorializing and criticism. Then in 1868 a number of social reforms were passed which sought to liberalize the increasingly moribund Empire, including a law relaxing censorship of the press. Journals which had been hounded out of existence after the coup were quickly re opened and prepared to do battle. The press—all of the press, left, right and center—had axes to grind with the Empire after such an extended period of enforced silence and they attacked the Emperor and Empress in a ceaseless cacophony of insulting cartoons, articles, editorials, and essays (see left).

In spite of all these glaring signs of institutional rot, the popularity of a wild, flailing dance in the working class districts of Paris spoke louder and more eloquently of the change and chaos to come than any article in any rabid republican broadside. The dance was the cancan, and within what Hegel describes as the core and essence of its ideal existence, its "moment," is the end of this world and humanity's first step onto the shores of utopia.

There is some doubt as to where the cancan came from. Some were convinced that it had been introduced into France, like gonorrhea, by army veterans returning from Algiers. Unlike the staged dance available to tourists in Montmartre from the 1890s to the present, with fe-

male chorus lines decked out in lace and frillies, the cancan in its original iteration was a mad, free-for-all open to women and men. Indeed, the only commonality between the two seems to be the choreographed, gut-wrenching kick that punctuates the rest of the dancers' motions.

The cancan was less a dance than a state of mind; and a good deal of that state had to do with unadulterated public sexual frenzy. Women who danced the original cancan did so "knickerless," but that's half the story. These were women of the working class: maids, seamstresses, and factory workers acting in a sexually predatory manner, exposing vulva and labia to all comers. To conservative observers this was the proletariat showing its teeth and claws, a glimpse at what could happen if the working classes ever got a chance to let it rip. It was an indication of the upheaval, chaos, and fun that within a few months would engulf Paris and change the world, forever.

The Death of the Empire

The war, is it just? No! The war, is it national? No! It is merely dynastic. In the name of humanity, or democracy, and the true interests of France, we adhere completely and energetically to the protestation of the International against the war.

Statement from the Paris Section of
the International Working Men's Association

The French need a drubbing. If the Prussians are victorious then centralization of the working class... the superiority of the Germans over the French in the world arena would mean at the same time the superiority of our theory over Proudhon's and so forth.

Marx to Engels, private correspondence

The Franco-Prussian War was very much like the First World War, a disastrous event that many foresaw but few expected: it could easily have been avoided, it catalyzed future conflicts, and even now, Europe reacts to repercussions from the hostilities.

By 1870 internal pressures in French society were reaching a breaking point. Some way had to be found to release the accumulated energy and expectations without tearing the Empire apart. This was recognized by the Bonapartist party, seeking to maintain the status quo just long enough to place the Prince Imperial on the throne with the Empress as regent. The Opposition were also aware that unless something truly spectacular happened, and soon, revolution could well sweep them into power at the head of a Republic.

In the spring of 1870 the crisis came, with a vengeance. Bismarck, always looking for a brawl to further unify the German states, proposed Leopold von Hohenzollern-Sigmaringen as a candidate for the Spanish throne, long considered a virtual patronage of France (at least by the French). Worse, after some consideration, the Spanish outright offered the throne to Leopold. Diplomacy proved useless, indeed, in many ways Bismarck played the diplomatic game to further enrage the French and whip Prussia into a Franco-phobic frenzy. War was formally declared on 19 July, 1870.

The Franco-Prussian War wasn't much of a conflict as eighteenth century hostilities go. The French had the chassepot, a relatively-modern cartridge rifle with a high rate of fire and excellent accuracy. They also had a secret weapon in the mitrailleuse, an innovative use of Gatling gun technology: increasing the American origi-

nal from six barrels to twenty-five, which could be fired in succession or all at once. The French infantry never got a chance to use either weapon. The Prussian General staff had been wooed by the armorer Krupp, who was convinced that modern warfare would be defined by artillery. Krupp had developed a whole line of breach-loading rapid-fire lightweight cannon that he sold in huge lots at bargain-basement prices to the Prussian General staff. As luck would have it Krupp turned out to be correct. The French infantry were ground to hamburger by artillery fire before they got close enough to engage the enemy. They were also burdened with some of the worst generals on the continent. Disaster followed disaster and the entire conflict took less than six weeks to effectively be decided. By 3 September, the main French army, under General Bazaine, was surrounded and surrendered to the Prussians at the town of Metz. The Emperor, who had been accompanying the army, more as a mascot than as an actual commander, was captured as well. The war in the provinces was over, the siege of Paris, which would lead to the proclamation of the Commune, was about to begin.

The Republic: Third Time's a Charm

To will always, this is the fact about Paris. You think she sleeps, no, she wills. The permanent will of Paris – it is of this that transitory governments are not enough aware. Paris is always in a state of pre-meditation. One fine day there it is. Paris decrees an event. France abruptly summoned, obeys...

Victor Hugo, from his
introduction to the Paris Guide, 1867

Reactions to the war in Paris had been mixed. In the leg-

islature, a few republicans had questioned the wisdom of the conflict and the mediocre seemed simply puzzled: Jules Favre, a republican and legislator, said "the French nation does not know why it is being sent to die." As the quote from the Paris section of the International (above) makes clear, the radicals were well aware of the real reason(s) for the conflict, unfortunately that knowledge did not translate into effective opposition to the war. In Belleville, a working class suburb of Paris soon to be prominent in the Commune, there was very little enthusiasm for the war. An attempt by Imperial provocateurs to rouse chauvinistic feelings backfired when the crowd replied with cries of, "Long Live Peace." The mob had to be forcibly dispersed by gendarmes. There were similar occurrences in Marseille and Lyon. Alternatively, it is also known that soldiers departing for the front were loudly applauded on their way. The bourgeoisie appear to have been firmly pro-war, though this would change, as would the attitude of the working classes.

News of the military catastrophe at Metz arrived in Paris on 3 September. The Opposition called for a legislative session the following day, a Sunday, and spent the evening planning for the morrow and what would undoubtedly be the first day of a new regime. Their task was two-fold, first to guarantee that Paris be denied its traditional role as dictator of both the revolution and the Republic, and second that the declaration of the Republic not be seen as the result of military defeat.

The Legislature, after some discussion, decided to pass a resolution that declared the throne vacant, formed a governmental commission to study that problem, urged the signing of an armistice, and finally convoked a National Assembly to deal with any further

developments. As the debate wore on, more and more of the crowd from the street made their way into the building. Two Blanquists, Granger and Levraud, moving rapidly, reached the Presidential chair and Granger declared, "In the presence of our disasters and in the face of the misfortunes of the country the people of Paris have invaded this place to proclaim the Republic and the downfall of the Empire." The President of the session, Schneider, clearly seeing where things were headed, closed the debate and escaped. Favre, gauging the mood of the mob and attempting to realize a little order, told the invaders to proceed to the Hotel de Ville in order to proclaim the Republic. The cry was taken up and the Republican deputies walked arm in arm to the steps of the Hotel de Ville, the traditional center of all revolutions in France.

When they arrived at the edifice things were very different. The revolutionary republicans (Jacobins) had beat them to declaring the Third Republic by several hours and were in the process of circulating in the crowd lists of names for ministerial positions. The legislative deputies, however, were not going to be outmaneuvered by a handful of fanatics: at the end of the day a suitably unremarkable group of men had been chosen to head the provisional government. These men included Adolphe Thiers (a detestable little imp and lifelong monarchist who supported the claims of the Orleans line of the house of Bourbon for the throne), also Leon Gambetta, Jules Favre, Jules Simon, and as Governor of Paris, General Louis Trochu; moderates, all.

The next day Charles Delescluze, a Jacobin and future Communard, met Antoine Arnoud, a radical journalist in the street and snarled angrily, "We are lost." Arnoud re-

plied that the parliamentary Left had been "able to completely fool the revolutionary socialist party," because it alone had organized for the proclamation. Gustave Flourens, another revolutionary, remarked after the end of the siege that the Republic had been proclaimed "so as to be able to better finish it off." In this instance meaning the revolutionary social concept of the Republic.

The Government of 4 September had a number of monumental tasks to deal with. The war was not over and had to be continued in spite of the fact that the next Prussian move was undoubtedly a siege of Paris. Suing for peace seemed a viable option but it was doubtful the people would allow for negotiations after such humiliation. A National Assembly had to be elected and convened quickly, otherwise the money necessary for the conflict could not be raised nor spent. The country had to be stabilized; violence, strikes and disorder had broken out in every major French city. Finally, the party of revolution, Jacobins, Internationalists, and Blanquists had to be controlled either by co-option or coercion. As time went on, and if the military and political situation deteriorated, the prospects for a new, more radical change of power became more viable.

What was this threat? Who were these revolutionaries, and what did they want? Oldest of all the revolutionary tendencies in France were the Jacobins, who traced their lineage back to Robespierre, Danton, St. Just, the Commune and the Committee for Public Safety of the Year II. Initially a radical democratic tendency which espoused Enlightenment, Rousseauist ideas; the Jacobins had been active in every revolution and insurrection since the Great Revolution. Although single-minded in their demand for a Republic, their conception varied

greatly from republicans of more moderate tendencies. The Jacobins initially had treated private property as sacrosanct, and in some theoretical constructs demanded ownership of property for every individual in order to guarantee freedom. As the nineteenth century progressed, however, these demands became less strident and by 1871, many of the Jacobins were espousing wildly socialist if not outright anarchist conceptions of property. The Jacobins had also changed their tune as regards the state. The Great and Terrible Year II (1792-1793) had always formed part of the mythology of the Jacobins; the hypercentralization affected by the Convention and the Committee for Public Safety found resonance with many latter-day Jacobins. By 1865, however, and with the example of the extremely authoritarian, centralized Imperial state and the impact of Proudhon's nonstop theoretical output on de-centralization, autonomy, and self-management, many Jacobin thinkers had soured on this tenet of their ideology. Finally, though occasionally ferociously nationalist, they always understood their Republic to be the Universal Republic, as when Tom Paine was elected and seated in the Convention by the first generation of Jacobins. This introduced a strong internationalist tendency into their theory, which in turn influenced other revolutionary groupings.

The International Working Men's Association, while not monolithic, was certainly representative of the workerist (ouvrieriste) revolutionary tendencies in France. By 1870 Marx had failed utterly to use the International to spread his ideas to anyone, except one or two German sections and, of course, Friedrich Engels. The French sections of the International were deeply influenced by anarchism, to the point of rewriting statutes

issued by the General Council (and written by Marx) to reflect their specific anti-political stance. The primary ideological influence in the French International sections was Proudhon wherein the state was perceived as the hand-maid of capital and destruction of one necessarily implied the destruction of the other. The other facet of Proudhon's thought, which the International supported, was the worker's cooperative movement. Proudhon urged the workers to maintain as much autonomy as possible from the bourgeoisie, hence the foundation of lending institutions and other organizations specifically designed to lessen the grip of the ruling class from around the neck of the working class. The International was also involved, where possible, in supporting the strikes that swept the country from 1868 to 1870.

In spite of propaganda to the contrary from Imperial and bourgeois sources, the International led a relatively staid existence. Activities included collecting funds for strikers, writing letters of support for working class causes, holding meetings, education and discussion groups for workers. The Internationalists were hardly terrorists. They were, however, some of the best and brightest minds then working on the social question, which may in turn be one of the reasons that, like no other working class organization in France, Imperial authorities loathed the International. The organization was hounded incessantly, twice having to effectively dissolve itself in order to protect its members. The leadership of the organization was tried three times, found guilty and sentenced to several years in prison. Membership in the organization alone sometimes proved to be sufficient for a fine or a night in jail.

Then there were the followers of Auguste Blanqui,

by 1871 he was the grand old man of revolution, having personally participated in the revolutions of 1830, 1848, and 1851. There were no specific ideas associated with Blanquism other than vague workerism and rabid atheism. Blanqui had taken some ideas from Gracchus Babeuf and his Conspiracy of Equals (circa 1796), and he did coin the phrase "dictatorship of the proletariat." This, however, was offset by his concentration on conspiracy, plot, and the physics of achieving revolution. What was to occur after the seizure of power remained vague to the point of incomprehensibility. Blanqui spent long stints behind bars, and during the 1860s a group of students began to venerate and correspond with the old revolutionary. Secret societies were formed and some minor harassment of Imperial authority occurred.

One idea that had a lot of resonance with the revolutionaries, indeed with French society generally, deserves attention: the idea of municipal liberties. Originally adopted and developed by the monarchist opposition, specifically due to the fear of Paris. Essentially, the concept of municipal liberties stated that virtually every aspect of life, militia, authority, taxation, services, sanitation, poor relief were all to be controlled by the city and its elected council or Commune. In 1865, a group of land-owners and journalists from Nancy published a Project on Decentralization and a conference on the same subject was held in Lyons in September 1869. Much of the Republican opposition in the legislature were also taken with the idea and a "Committee on Decentralization" was formed in January of 1870 to look into the issue. Augustin Thierry, a popular historian, had written a number of works on how "the municipal revolutions of the twelfth century," were "the source of

the social order of modern times," and, "the cradle of our liberties." The working classes were also interested in the idea. Proudhon had theorized an anarchist world of free communes and independent producers bound together by solidarity and contract. The Commune was an almost mystical term for the revolutionaries, recalling as it did the primacy of Paris during the Great Revolution, the capture and execution of the king, and the insurrectionary journees when the sans-culottes came forward and saved the patrie in danger. Parisians had a special reason to demand municipal rights, the capital had no municipal council after the June revolt of 1848, and this was taken to be an insult endured by no other municipality in the country.

Afterword Commentary on Form and Content in *Elements of Refusal*

In the event that the powers-that-be ever re-institute book-burning, it is my considered opinion that *Elements of Refusal* will be consigned, immediately and with extreme prejudice, to the pyre.

Elements of Refusal (EoR) broke onto the anarchist scene like a bombshell. In the fall of 1988 the book had been making the rounds of the milieu in New York, with some extremely mixed reviews, and after a Libertarian Book Club Forum I found myself in temporary possession of a copy. I finished the volume, cover to cover, in a single sitting of some fourteen hours and then re-read it in a more deliberate, careful fashion over the course of the following week. I recall distinctly the feelings associated with my first engagement with Zerzan's work, something like drowning in honey: inexorable, deliberate, overwhelming.

At the time of the publication of EoR the state of anarchist theory was dismal, particularly the North American variant. My time was spent digging up dead authors who espoused simplistic theories criticizing social categories that had ceased to exist. Re-worked syndicalism, martyrologies of every stripe and description (a one-woman show called "Emma"!), and social ecology—if you had enough money to earn the degree. Further, by this time many of us had begun to see through the Situationist con; their lack of rigor in ascribing too wide an ar-

ray of social and cultural phenomena to "the spectacle," the ludicrous use of the most retrograde Marxist categories, the childish example of their practical activity, and finally, their embrace of the Enlightenment project (the appropriation of Nature) without recognition nor discussion of the historical dialectic contained therein. As if to drive the point home, North American adherents of Situationist ideas plunged headfirst into the same mistakes listed above and tore themselves and their various organizations and journals to theoretical shreds before they could effectively publicize their ideology.

Elements of Refusal then, was something new; Zerzan had pulled out all the stops and followed his theoretical assumptions to their logical conclusion. In the process he introduced three innovations that now form the foundation of much of the theoretical discussion in North American anarchist circles.

1) Zerzan developed a method of dialectical critique that is both immanent and extraneous to the phenomena that he is examining. One of the sequelae of the application of this method has been the reinvigoration of the project of philosophical anthropology.

2) EoR raises the issue of criteria as regards insurrectionary subject. Zerzan makes the empirically sound thesis that those who have the most to lose invariably make the deepest and most radical insurrectionary breaks with the past, which jettisons two centuries of bad social philosophy, and

3) Zerzan argues consistently throughout the volume that violence (riot, insurrection) has been (or could be) an effective and vital force for social change, in direct contradistinction to Leftist ideology, which takes a general stance on the issue of puritanical prohibition. Leftists jus-

tify this by either moralism or cowardice (your choice).

In a letter I received recently, a correspondent described the critical method employed by Zerzan as an example of immanent critique. This statement, while minimally accurate, misses the mark as to where Zerzan has taken the method. Horkheimer in *The Eclipse of Reason* has it that immanent critique confronts, "the existent, in its historical context, with the claim of its conceptual principles, in order to realize the relationship between the two and thus transcend them." Conceptually almost intuitive, and not a particularly new nor sophisticated critical strategy, it has been employed by theorists as disparate as Marx and Voltaire. The first generation of critical theorists merely refined the technique and provided it with a philosophical and historical foundation. There are limitations to immanent critique, however, and part of Zerzan's innovative manipulation of the technique stems directly from these parameters. Immanent critique, as the name implies, situates itself firmly on the terrain of the system it seeks to examine. It is maintained by partisans of immanent critique that this is the method's greatest strength. It may also be its greatest flaw. For, while holding a system to its own claims produces (or should produce) a relatively high standard of consistency and rigor, it also forces the theorist to avoid any criteria arising either from the subjective or external sources, put succinctly, in judging what is (the dominant society) one is restricted from using what is not (utopia).

Another flaw contained within immanent critique is its reliance upon the conceptual claims of the system as criteria. During the period in time that the first generation of critical theorists were writing such a

mechanism worked, and well. In the current era, and as a result of the lessened expectations associated with the pronouncements of both neo-conservatives and neo-liberals, the claims of capital have decreased to almost nothing. Where before the critical theorist had myriad, sweeping statements from the "best of all possible worlds," "chicken in every pot," grab bag to minor, work-a-day promises and statements made by bosses, politicians, and captains of industry to utilize as criteria with which to judge the behavior of the *ancien regime*. Today, even cost-of-living increases are threatened in collective-bargaining negotiations and corporate downsizing has brought back the good old days of early capitalism, including classic nineteenth-century workplace phenomena such as immediate dismissal and the ten-hour workday. This ideological retrenchment has been global in scope; no one speaks anymore of the developing countries, or uses the argument that La Antigua, Guatemala, or Kinshasa will one day be indistinguishable from Hoboken. The global contraction of capital has meant a concomitant contraction in its conceptual terrain, which in turn produces a decreased ability to abstract criteria and utilize them in the implementation of an immanent critical method.

Zerzan's response to this weakening of the critique has been to unilaterally (and without asking permission) expand the method to include empirical data, historical and anthropological, to strengthen his hybrid of immanent critique. His expansion has also occasionally included subjective material, which, while architectonically indefensible, has been justified in the past by a number of other thinkers. Marcuse, in *Eros and Civilization*, not only augments the concept of reason by plac-

ing phantasy firmly within its bounds, he also makes of phantasy a motive conceptual and psychological apparatus which, for lack of a better name, may best be described as the "will to Utopia." In spite of the problems, incoherence, and confusion associated with *Eros and Civilization,* the philosophical construct used in defining phantasy seems accurate and—though with less intelligent or careful theorists there remains a great possibility of mischief and foolishness—it provides the serious critical theorist with a powerful tool.

Inclusion of anthropological and historical empirical data isn't particularly earth-shattering, however, what Zerzan does with these references is to use the material as a criteria with which to judge capital and the contemporary state of the human species. Zerzan has been greatly assisted in this project by developments in anthropology dating from the mid-1960s. Developments in this area have included discussions as disparate as the diet of the !Kung branch of the San in the Kalahari to the taxonomic differentiation between Homo sapiens and Homo erectus. Where all of this academic work has led is a complete reappraisal of pre-agricultural human society; from the classic Hobbesian view of pre- historical life as being "nasty, brutish and short," to an understanding of pre-agricultural humanity as living an existence of singular grace, harmony, solidarity, and health. The impact that these anthropological discussions have had on critical theory are, and will continue to be, staggering. In the idealist tradition the concept of an original separation (humanity from nature, individual from society, subject from object) has always formed the foundation of its critical etiology, now anthropology has produced empirically grounded speculation of the existence of just

such an event. Anthropology has also provided critical theorists with a glimpse of human life and society in that "Golden Age," the Ur-phenomena of the species. Zerzan was the first critical theorist to put these pieces into place and he did so in general categorical discussions, as well as using the "Golden Age" to establish a set of criteria with which to judge the historical development of current social and cultural phenomena. It is this foundation that grounds his discussions of language, number, time, art, and agriculture; this in turn has allowed Zerzan the freedom to stand outside the system under examination without losing either his critical stance or effective criteria, ultimately enhancing the ability to level a withering assault on the dominant society.

One of the fascinating, and on first glance seemingly tangential, sequelae of Zerzan's use of empirical anthropology has been to revivify the project of philosophical anthropology developed by Max Scheler (a phenomenologist associated with political Catholicism) during the first two decades of the twentieth century. For Scheler the goal of the work was to illustrate in precise detail how, "all the specific achievements and works of man—language, conscience, tools, weapons, ideas of right and wrong, the state, leadership, the representational function of art, myths, religion, science, history, and social life—arise from the basic structures of human existence" (*Man's Place in Nature*, 1928). Of course, the completion of such a task is impossible primarily because the project assumes a static human nature divorced from historical and social circumstance. For critical theory, however, if the project and problem statement could be appropriately reformed, there may be much to learn from such an investigation. Horkheimer thought so too,

and in an essay titled "Remarks on Philosophical Anthropology," he frames the project thus,"The project of modern philosophical anthropology consists in finding a norm that will provide meaning to an individual's life in the world as it currently exists." Or to be even more clear, insight into human nature should, at a minimum, inform those who criticize the present in hopes of realizing a quantitative break with it. Zerzan's theoretics address this in a negative, critical manner. Returning to the anthropological data, if the vast majority of human organization and institutions have not been characterized by language, number, time, and art then these phenomena must not be associated with satisfying basic needs and desires (human nature). Such theoretical machinations may never produce a final answer or series of answers as to what human nature is, but they do produce an outline of what human nature is not. This is critical theory fulfilling its promise; not illuminating truth, but excluding falsehood.

One of the basic tenets of the theory of opposition, at least since Babeuf's Conspiracy of Equals, has been the uncontested claim of the proletariat as revolutionary subject. Nineteenth-century thought continued and refined this virtual article of faith. There were a few wafflers; Bakunin, for instance, discussed the lumpen as holding great promise as a potential revolutionary subject but in the end, and under pressure from his Swiss, artisan supporters he dropped this line of conjecture. Suffice it to say that when even apologists for reaction (Hippolyte Taine comes to mind) accept and include the danger of this new social class in their writings, the point has been made and accepted, left, right, and center. The proletarian gospel continues down to

the Situationists, who, unable to distinguish bourgeoisie from proletariat using the marxist formula based on economic class, redefined the battle lines so that order-givers morphed into *bourgeois* and order-takers became *revolutionary subject.* The social war of the haves and the have-nots is as old and accepted as the system that produced them, which should make one wonder just how accurate the description is.

Zerzan has come at the problem from a very different angle however, and as one might expect, found the whole discussion lacking in both clarity and scope. The second section of EoR contains essays dealing with what one theorist in the milieu has termed, "lost history." This label seems more than appropriate, if one adds the caveat that "lost" conveys a broad enough definition to include both misplaced and disappeared into the halls of academia—never sighted again. Zerzan's historical essays deal with examples of riot, insurrection, and physical refusal, generally. In each instance the rioters have primarily been persons of the middle classes, individuals who are small property owners, persons of some standing in their communities, and finally, individuals with a great deal to lose, and very little motive to tear their respective societies down. This general statement is applicable to participants in riots and insurrctions throughout history; Luddites, Regulators, Whiskey Rebels, Rebecca and her Sisters, Captain Swing, King Mob, the Paris Commune of 1871, Makhnovists, the New York City boogie-till-ya-puke party and power outage of 1977, the MLK assassination riots, May '68 in France and so forth. While not all of the above events are discussed in EoR, investigation into these occurrences reveals similar findings about their

participants; the vast majority were employed, or employers, artisans, weavers, farmers, mechanics, sailors, officer cadets, students, merchants, tavern keepers, local elected officials. They were not solely nor even conspicuously the industrial proletariat. Throughout the historical essays in EoR, Zerzan makes this point, implicitly and explicitly, and using primary sources.

Zerzan isn't the first theorist to uncover this information. Crane Brinton, a colleague of Marcuse's at the Office for Strategic Services (forerunner of the CIA), in a study of the revolutionary milieux during the Terror, found that the Jacobins presented for a brief period of time the spectacle of men acting without regard for their own material interests. Brinton, an apologist for the dominant society with a sneaking admiration for revolution, seems clearly stunned by this and fails to follow the insight to its logical conclusion. The potential impact of this thesis regarding the insurrectionary subject, particularly in the context of a post-industrial economic situation, is shattering. To enumerate just one development, it provides some empirical substantiation to Camatte's thesis that humanity, in the years since the Second World War, has been utterly proletarianized, altering the insurrectionary project from one of class versus class to species versus society (or specifically, social concept). There are many other implications of this thesis to be worked out in the coming years by theorists who have as yet to find a voice, a method (and a publisher).

Violence, as tool for social change, fell into disrepute in the mid-twentieth century, and has yet to regain the pre-eminent place it held in the revolutionary milieux of the nineteenth century. It is sometimes forgotten just

how enamored of violence our political ancestors were. Albert Parsons' publication of Johann Most's article on dynamite in *The Alarm*, and Most's most popular pamphlet, "Revolutionary Military Science," contained recipes and use instructions for everything from fulminate of mercury to prussic acid. Beyond the printed word, the global wave of assassinations, bombings, and bank robberies, virtually defined anarchist revolutionary activity during the last decade of the nineteenth and the first decade of the twentieth centuries.

At some point, however, all this was replaced with the gospel of non-violence, civil disobedience, non-cooperation, etc. It is only recently that violence has re-entered serious discussion in anarchist milieux. Zerzan in many of his essays draws the proper conclusion when he finds that violence has been an essential facet of historical refusal. In addition, he points out that violence seems to have just as great a propensity to deliver the goods as other methods of redress or refusal. P.M., the Swiss author of *bolo'bolo*, an anarchocommunism-ist utopian blueprint, discusses violence in detail as an integral part of his post-revolutionary society (requiring its own institutional resolution). This seems a proper next line of inquiry and returns us once again to the project of a philosophical anthropology. The re-vaulation of violence also indicates one of the final breaks with the New Left of the sixties, and its failure to achieve even a single positive outcome.

Finally it should be noted that the Unabomber has focused much discussion on the debate about the revaluation of violence. As one might expect, many who once endorsed propaganda by the deed are now running for cover as fast as their trembling legs can carry

them (*Fifth Estate*, as an example), while there are those who, in spite of the choice of targets and the possibility of collateral casualties (a handy term provided by the nation-state to ameliorate its random violence, why not ours?), support FC, in some instances for no other reason than the fact tht someone, somewhere, finally and really *did* something. For those who would doubt the efficacy of violence, the Unabomber also presents a powerful example of just what a political bombing campaign can produce; the FC Manifesto (*Industrial Society and its Future*) has been translated into dozens of languages and read and discussed by thousands if not hundreds of thousands.

It should be clear as well that the project that Zerzan has outlined is far from finished. Indeed, in many of his essays he leaves more unsaid than explicated, more question remain than answers given. In some cases this is unavoidable, in others indicates a necessary working out of some of the more basic philosophical questions. An example is the issue of identity.

Theorists currently working the critical fields fall, to my thinking, into two general categories, those who abhor the identity thesis and those who uphold it. Adorno in *Negative Dialectics* forcefully raised the issue of identity and the conundrum continues unabated. To my knowledge Zerzan has yet to wrangle with identity, though it's difficult to contextualize any critical statement without understanding where the theorist stands on this most central issue. In addition, Zerzan identifies division of labor as one of the single concepts responsible for the dominant culture. This is accurate, however, an examination of division of labor, particularly in the context of post-industrial society, needs to be done. This,

not only to strengthen his previous essays, but also to provide a foundation for where other theorists will undoubtedly go.

Leaving both innovations and critique behind, however, *Elements of Refusal* remains a seminal book in the critical tradition. It started many people thinking and moving in directions they had been loathe to go, it has re-framed virtually the entire critical project as it enters the twenty-first century, and provided renewed vigor to a dialectical examination of the dominant culture.

Modern Slavery

John Brown's Body

150 years is a long time to moulder

John Brown; Abolitionist; The Man who Killed Slavery, Sparked the Civil War, and Seeded Civil Rights. David S. Reynolds, Vintage Books, New York, NY. 578 pages.

John Brown is probably the closest thing we have in the US to a real flesh and blood heroic contradiction. For conservatives his name rings with calls to bloodshed and freeing the blacks, for liberals he is the man who put civil rights, in its modern definition, on the political map. And finally, for extremists of all types the man is a real old-fashioned role model. A guy who was unwilling or unable to bend conscience to law, and in the process sparked the only intentional insurrection aimed at challenging US sovereignty in the republic's history (excepting the Confederate states secession, of course). This piece is meant to provide a twofold discussion of Brown, first as a review of Reynolds' book, and second as a discussion in light of the anarchist political ramifications, if any, of Brown's actions.

Brown comes out of a pure New England heritage. He was born in Torrington, Connecticut on May 9, 1800, and claimed, probably correctly, to be a direct descendent of Peter Brown, one of the Mayflower company. What distinguished Brown right from the beginning, however, was being reared in a home that virtually oozed Calvinist Puritanism of the most extreme kind. And here is where things get interesting for the observer because the general attitude and perception of modern society to Puritanism really doesn't do justice to the re-

ligion and its core concepts. First it should be noted that much of the understanding of sexual repression, supposedly rampant among the Puritans, is wholly inaccurate. Though they did view humanity as utterly corrupt and believed humanity's salvation could be obtained solely through the sacrifice of Christ, that didn't mean that sexuality was prohibited. Churches that don't believe in sexual intercourse don't last long; witness the Shakers. One puritan tradition provides an example: prior to marriage, it was customary for the betrothed to spend at least one night, sometimes several, sleeping together in the same bed in order to confirm the physical "compatibility" of the future life-partners. In some instances the groom-to-be was sewn into a sheet to make sure that nothing too outrageous occured over the course of the night. I wonder, though, how many of those cotton cocoons were found to be intact in the morning, and how many were feverishly torn apart in the dark of the night and perhaps a bit stained come morning...

Alongside the utter physical corruption of humanity, the fear of God, the necessity of grace, the requirement of charity and compassion for all God's creatures, there exists in Puritanism the seeds of some pretty seditious stuff. First, and most obvious in Brown's case, is the issue of slavery, which had been discussed and was a point of contention within all the dissenting churches in England. The puritans, like the Quakers, and especially the American variation of puritanism, went to great lengths to condemn slavery and to participate in its circumvention. In 1700 the Calvinist judge Samuel Sewell had penned and published the pamphlet *The Selling of Joseph*, which argued, among other things, that blacks should be treated according to the Golden Rule. George

Whitefield, a Calvinist minister who toured the Americas in 1739, in a letter to Southern slaveholders warns, "The blood of them, spilt for years, in your respective provinces, will ascend up to heaven against you." The preachings of the American Calvinists Jonathan Edwards, and his son, Jonathan Edwards Jr., bring a violence and apocalyptic quality to the vision of abolitionism that figured heavily in Brown's own ideas.

The real linkage of Puritanism to radicalism in the nineteenth century occurs through the central role that antinomianism played in Calvinist theology. Behind the extreme reliance placed by the Calvinists upon individual interpretation of the Bible lurks the very real anarchist sentiment that no law is higher than individual conscience, and that conscience trumps law, always, period. The author states, "this [Puritan] spirit fostered a law-flouting individualism that appeared variously in militant Abolitionism, Transcendentalist self-reliance, and the 'individual sovereignty' championed by anarchists and free-love activists..." Emerson, perhaps the best example of this finely-tuned, New England-puritan, intellectual machine states admiringly in an 1844 lecture,

> *The Puritan element which demands religious freedom, as the birth-right of Heaven, in matters spiritual, is the nourisher of that civil liberty which releases the body from secular despotism in matters temporal.*

The Southern slaveholders and their apologists understood, as well, where the enemy was coming from. In 1863, Samuel Cox, a democratic pro-slavery congressman stated,

> *Abolition is the offspring of ....Puritanism is a reptile which has been boring into...the Constitution and this civil war comes in like a devouring sea!*

Another pro-slavery journalist commented,

> *Everybody who ever saw a Puritan knows that from the days of Calvin and Knox, down to those of Cotton Mather, and still later to ...John Brown – everybody knows they have been the same arrogant, self-righteous, conceited race – each man acting on the belief of his own infallibility and of other people's fallibility.*

Enter John Brown, whose father Owen had been deeply affected by Calvinist Puritanism, and who later in life took up the anti-slavery gauntlet to the extent that he became an agent of the Underground Railroad and withdrew financial support from Western Reserve College in Ohio because blacks were refused entry into the institution. When John was five, Owen moved the entire family to Hudson, Ohio, a town in the Western Reserve that had seen multiple migrations of New Englanders; so much so that the Western reserve came to be known as New Connecticut. Brown was raised in an area where Native Americans vastly outnumbered white settlers, and most of his childhood friends were boys from surrounding Indian tribes.

Seems every historian looks for that defining moment in the lives of historical agents when the "turn" occurs. When, as a result of circumstance and experience the individual, knowingly or not, sets a course that will cause an intersection (collision?) with destiny that produces "history." Reynolds isn't immune to this urge and he sets Brown's militant abolition on its course as a result of two incidents in his early life. One is banal, and exactly what you'd expect for a man who viscerally hated slavery. The other, however, is something of a revelation that provides a unique look into the man Brown was, and the anarchist he might have become. Brown

often accompanied his father on cattle drives during the War of 1812 to soldiers stationed in Detroit under General William Hull. On one of these drives Brown befriended a young slave at a night stopover, and was horrified to see his master beat him with kitchen utensils and then force him to sleep in a barn wearing nothing but rags. Brown immediately recognized,

> *the wretched, hopeless condition of Fatherless & Motherless slave children; for such have neither Fathers nor Mothers to protect and provide for them." Brown would describe the experience as being part of the process that made him "in the end ..a most determined Abolitionist," and eventually to "declare, or Swear; Eternal war on Slavery.*

The other event that is given prominence in Brown's early life is his exposure to the soldiers of Hull's army. The profanity, disobedience, and coarseness of the soldiers appalled Brown and he wrote later that what he experienced, "was to so far disgust him with Military affairs that he would neither train, or drill; but paid fines & got along like a Quaker until his age finally cleared him of Military duty." So much for his sense of loyalty to government or military service.

A significant portion of the book deals with Brown's coming of age and adult business dealings and family life. He tried a number of trades primarily in agriculture and just couldn't seem to pull off the American Dream. He was well backed by banks and wealthy individuals with loans for purchases of land, business interests, and the like. But, due less to lack of diligence and more to cursed bad luck and an inability to produce that petty viciousness that characterizes American business culture in all ages, he continually, and occasionally spec-

tacularly, failed to put any of his endeavors on a paying basis. As one of his backers noted, Brown wasn't dishonest, just ill-equipped to make money. Brown was married twice, fathered some twenty children, and appears to have been a strict but loving father and husband. His children would internally disagree on their father's militant Abolitionism, particularly the Harper's Ferry insurrection (two of his sons died in the raid) but remained steadfast in support of his goals. His daughters were particularly anti-slavery and were always pushing the men to participate in their father's activities. In later years, and with the triumph of the North in the Civil War, many of his children, again particularly the women, would find their own injustices to fight. It is known that the Haymarket Martyr Albert Parsons had been in contact with several members of the Brown family after the civil war, and found some justification for his anarchism echoed by Brown's economic ideas.

Brown's travels for business brought him into contact with a large variety of abolitionists and fellow travelers. He seems to have turned up, at one time or another, on every doorstep of every radical abolitionist in the US and Canada, seeking support, securing funding, and discussing ways to destroy slavery. His own ideas proceeded apace and he began to dig into the history of slave revolts and utopian communities for insights into how to free, and provide for, every slave held in the US. His answer was uniquely insurrectionist and presaged many post-industrial writers, especially our own Hakim Bey.

Brown began research into slave revolts, which they varied in tactics, strategies, and geographic placement. What he was really looking for was a guide to follow, a blueprint for a successful sustained insurrection. He

found it in Nat Turner's 1831 revolt. Turner's initial rapid, violent strike; liberation of as many slaves as possible; retreat into the wilderness from which to hide and to continue further incursions against slaveholders, was studied, debated, and eventually adapted into the overarching strategy that Brown would follow at Harper's Ferry. The major difference between the two is that Brown sought to duplicate Turner's plan, not on a handful of Virginia plantations in a fairly limited region, but across the entire South, and including the liberation of all slaves in that area. One strength of his plans was the geography of the eastern states. In his business travels Brown had become familiar with the Appalachians, extending from Maine to Georgia, and in Brown's estimation a perfect natural screen from which to strike into the South, and to use as shelter when chased. Brown planned to send non-combatant freed slaves north, to Canada if necessary, and the remainder would stay and fight in the mountain redoubt, freeing more and more slaves until the South would have to discontinue slavery. To quote Brown, "Nat Turner, with fifty men, held Virginia for five weeks. Twenty men in the Alleghenies could break slavery to pieces in two years." And what would this mobile, multi-racial community look like, striking at slaveholders and plantations, moving and running as needed? Brown's reading led him to maroon communities, which he took as his model. Maroons, from the French marronage meaning *flight*, or perhaps the cimarrones meaning *wild, untamed*—were groups of slaves who had escaped into the wilderness, founded communities, and defended them from incursion by slaveholders, soldiers, or other forces of civilization using guerilla tactics and knowledge of the terrain. As was

known to Brown, maroons predated the landing of the Mayflower by a century. The Spanish explorer Lucas Vazquez de Ayllon founded a colony in South Carolina, probably at the mouth of the Peedee River. Included in the goods brought to found the outpost were some one hundred black slaves. The Spaniards relocated to Haiti shortly after founding the colony and left behind a significant population of the slaves who retreated into the interior and lived with the natives. As Bey and others have pointed out, these maroon communities composed of whites, blacks, and natives (tri-racial isolates) are an important precursor of American drop-out culture, and more is left to be written on their importance.

Brown thought the tactic ideal for his planned insurrectionary communities, and explicitly used examples of maroon military successes to gain backing and finances for the coming incursion from his anti-slavery supporters. These examples include the Second Seminole War of 1835 to 1841, where a small but potent force of black and Seminole warriors launched guerrilla battles all through Florida, killing sixteen hundred settlers and soldiers and eventually causing the US government to spend forty million dollars to end the War. In this confrontation the blacks were described by a correspondent as, "the most formidable force, more blood-thirsty, active and revengeful than the Indians." Brown had also studied the Caribbean maroons and insurrections, especially Touissant l'Ouverture's successful insurrection against both slavery and French governance of Haiti. Though eventually captured, imprisoned, and killed, his armed forces continued the struggle and in 1804 ended both French colonization and slavery at a stroke.

So, Brown had a plan for fighting and freeing slaves,

and a military plan for maintaining and spreading the insurrection, and a plan for how the communities of the freed slaves may look, all he needed was money, an army, and weapons. No small task—but then Kansas began to bleed, and the opportunities for violent abolitionists like himself to cause mayhem and secure wealthy Eastern backers became plentiful.

Brown's sons, John Jr., Jason, and Salmon, and their families, were the first in his immediate circle to move to Kansas, taking advantage of both the opportunity for cheap land and to combat pro-slavery forces face to face. Their letters throughout 1855 became increasingly alarming to Brown, "There are slaves owned within three miles of us," wrote Salmon. And John Jr., in a letter requesting money for guns, states,

> *the great drama will open here, when will be presented the great struggle in arms, of Freedom and Despotism in America. Give us the arms and we will be ready for the contest.*

Brown raised some money from Eastern supporters, and also took the decision to travel to Kansas himself and see what he could do for his children and against the slavers. His actions there proved to be not only foundational to his life as a military insurrectionist, but also provided the abolitionist movement with the spectacle of one of their number fighting back against the violence of pro-slavery forces; and fighting back in a manner that was both savage and effective.

Brown, along with a son-in-law and son Oliver, arrived in Kansas in late fall of 1855. The summer had been pleasant but recent wind and rain storms had ravaged the crops, and all except one or two family members were suffering from malaria. Brown quickly

built a shelter for the family, hauled in any crops that were salvageable, and waited for the political winds to warm. In December Brown and sons were alerted that pro-slavery forces were on the move towards Lawrence. With as many men as he could gather, he rode to Lawrence in expectation that pro-slavery forces were about to sack the town. The skirmish that ensued was minor with both sides claiming victory, and yet it showed to all observers that social peace in Kansas had become a fragile and rare commodity.

The event most associated with Brown's name, other than Harper's Ferry, is the killing of several pro-slavers during the night of May 26, 1856 at Pottawatomie Creek. The cycles of violence in Kansas swept the Browns into the storm, and their response was as uncompromising as their unique brand of extreme abolition. In the months prior to Pottawatomie, pro-slavery forces had exacted terrible costs on the free-staters. Beatings, public humiliation, and murder were all visited on free state men and their families, usually with no official response whatever. Worse in the eyes of Brown and his family, the free-staters seemed willing to suffer such abuse without so much as a whimper; not only did they not fight to free slaves, they didn't even fight to defend themselves. It was all too much for Brown, and with the news of the caning of Senator Charles Sumner by Preston Brooks on the floor of the senate on May 22, his patience came to an end. Sumner was badly beaten in the attack (and would be absent from the Senate for three years to recuperate). When news of the attack reached Brown and his party, Jason Brown reported, "At the blow the men went crazy—crazy. It seemed to be the finishing decisive touch." One of the company urged restraint and

caution to which Brown replied, "Caution, caution, sir. I am eternally tired of hearing that word caution. It is nothing but the word of cowardice."

There comes a time in the historical drama when bloodshed, while not elegant or necessary, just makes a whole lot of sense, and violence seemed the obvious response to these events. Every insurrection against the forces of law and authority is an example of such moments: the Commune, the storming of the Bastille, and Pottawatomie. Brown and his sons had seen free-staters beaten, murdered, out-foxed at the ballot box, derided by then President Franklin Pierce, all to the purpose of turning Kansas into a slave state. It was time for payback.

Brown, and four of his sons, Salmon, Frederick, Owen, and Oliver, with two others, made their way up Pottawatomie Creek. In the process they rousted several pro-slavery men from their slumbers, took them into the night, and stabbed and shot them to death. These were brutal deaths, in which the victims had hands and fingers sliced off while trying to stop the blows of swords, usually ending in a coup de grace by pistol shot to the head. A total of five were dispatched after which the Brown party returned to their basecamp where other free-state soldiers and rifle companies had gathered. Word of the murders spread fast, both south and east, and it was generally acknowledged that Brown in the space of a single night had changed the impression that abolitionists. They had been considered laughable cowards who ran from a fight and meekly submitted to public caning, and now were thought of as brutal, violence-prone, slavery-hating maniacs. After Pottawatomie the impression in the South, particularly of Brown, was that these abolitionists seemed like demons intent on kill-

ing Southern men and attacking Southern institutions. The brutal details of the murders made the rounds in the press and through rumor, causing revulsion in the South and driving the abolitionists to that place of soul-searching they would visit often throughout the civil war, as tens of thousands died in defense of slavery and secession or of abolition and the union.

Brown stayed in Kansas for another six months fighting pro-slavery forces as the need arose. Mostly these skirmishes were fought to draws, as federal soldiers rushed from place to place to stamp out the fires of violence. Brown and his followers did decisively beat a much larger force of pro-slavers at Black Jack, but the Kansas wars were ending. More federal control was being exerted in the state, and slowly a consensus of opinion was developing that pushed Kansas firmly into the Free State column. A mass informal clemency was granted by Kansas Governor Geary, which had the effect of relieving Brown and followers from being charged with murder, carnage, or anything else.

What a change for Brown in a year, from frontiersman to criminal to warrior for freedom; at least so it seemed in the perception of the press and certain lawmakers. Brown was now to parlay all that good press into money, men, and material for his final act: a slave insurrection that would topple slavery, and could lead to the founding of a new republic in the South, a republic of ex-slaves and former masters. Brown had drafted a constitution and had it ratified by a "convention" of freed slaves and sympathizers in Canada. Brown, the revolutionary, sought to justify the insurrection, and even provide for a measure of post-facto legality. Brown had been in contact with a group of wealthy New England

financiers and industrialists who condoned his activities and largely funded his various paramilitary initiatives. These men—after Harper's Ferry called the Secret Six by the press—were a mixed bag of liberals, and the deeply religious, all of them vigorously opposed to slavery and devoted to its abolition by any means necessary. Brown had been friendly with many of them for several years. He collected all the material, men, and money he could gather and moved in small, increments towards Harper's Ferry. The Ferry located in Northern Virginia (now West Virginia) was an ideal spot for Brown to begin his war of liberation. The town held a Federal Armory, where the US manufactured and stored rifles, bullets, and all manner of small arms. There was also a rifle factory and the countryside surrounding the town was dotted with medium-size farms, all with sizable slave populations. The town was perfectly situated so that Brown, after seizing arms and freeing slaves, could repair to the vastness of the Blue Ridge Mountains and launch raids against slaveholders while evading federal troops and state militias. Even now, some two hundred years on, the plan sounds pretty hare-brained. Brown, however, was convinced it would work, and Reynolds seems to side with him in defending the relative military soundness of the venture. There is one requirement that neither man took into account: guerrilla forces survive by being surrounded by a sympathetic, or at least neutral, peasantry or small-village population. The first modern guerrilla force, the Boers, knew this, and T.E. Lawrence, the military and intellectual father of all guerrilla movements in the twentieth century, builds his entire tactical framework on a sympathetic population that provides information on the enemy and recruits

for the insurgents. Mao said that if revolutionaries are fish, then the peasantry is the water through which they swim. Brown would have found few supporters among the white occupants of Blue Ridge farms and cabins, who—while too poor to own slaves—would still have drunk deep of the racism brewed at that time and in that place. In all Brown finally ended up with twenty one soldiers, he had wanted fifty but couldn't wait any longer and had no time for another recruiting drive up north. These men included some sixteen white men and five blacks, including one freed slave who, among other things, hoped to free his wife and children as a result of the raid. Brown had also been in contact with Fredrick Douglass and tried repeatedly to interest him in the operation; Douglass refused, stating that he felt the raid was suicide and would not achieve even a small degree of success. Harriet Tubman, by contrast, desperately wanted to go but was too ill to travel.

So on Sunday night, October 16th 1959, Brown left three of the men in their rented farmhouse to act as a rearguard, as the remaining raiders hopped into a wagon for the short ride to Harper's Ferry. Two other soldiers left along the way and went to cut the telegraph wires east and west of the town. Brown and company came to the bridge that stretched across the Potomac, and took the night watchman hostage. The night watchman was an aging and benign man who was familiar with many of the raiders and had initially assumed they were either drunk or playing a game. The raiders then headed for the armory on the banks of the Potomac, seized the guard, and forced the gate. The guard, John Whelan, was told to keep still or he would be killed. Brown announced,

I came here from Kansas, and this is a slave state; I want to free all the negroes in this state; I have possession of the US armory, and if the citizens interfere with me I must only burn the town and have blood.

The arsenal across the street was seized and two raiders walked across town to take possession of the bridge over the Shenandoah River. Brown and a small group of men set off for Hall's Rifle Works, and on the way took several citizens hostage. They easily broke into the munitions factory and held the hostages there, to be freed after the raiders left town. Two of the raiders were left there to be joined later by a third. Six men, three white and three black, were sent to rouse the countryside, free slaves, and return to the Ferry with them. The six first made for the plantation of Louis Washington, the great-great grandnephew of George Washington, Brown wanted two of his possessions to lead the army to end slavery, a pistol given by Lafayette to Washington, and the sword Frederick the Great had sent to Washington after the final triumph at Yorktown. These things were procured and then the raiders announced the final insult, they had also come to free his slaves. At this news Washington collapsed and he was placed in a wagon with his ex-slaves and trundled off to the Ferry. The hostages and freed slaves arrived at the armory and Brown provided each of the black men with a pike and instructed them to prevent the escape of the white hostages.

Thus far, everything had gone well, Brown was in effective control of the town. He controlled the bridges, cut the telegraph lines, seized and freed a number of slaves, and then it was time to exit quickly to the vast wilderness of the mountains. That is not, however, what happened. Brown began to dawdle. He had expected

more slaves to join him, and those who did were looking very uncomfortable and uneasy with their new roles as liberators. The reaction isn't surprising; to have group of men, black and white, not only pronounce you free but place a weapon in your hands, and expect you to use it against your former master would push the bounds of anyone's capacity. Hostile witnesses after the raid maintained that not one of the freedmen joined Brown. This seems overly pessimistic: Washington's coachman Jim seems to have been ready for a fight, and one of Brown's soldiers in the aftermath stated that Jim fought like a "tiger," and—as he was killed in the final assault—that assessment seems borne out. Regardless, Brown dallied through the night and into the morning of October 17; the raiders at the Rifle Works sent repeated messages imploring Brown to move out of town, to no avail.

Things had actually begun to deteriorate around midnight when the relief guard at the Potomac bridge came on duty. He immediately saw that something was wrong, and when two men walked out of the shadows and told him to halt he made a beeline for the Galt House, a saloon. He told his story to the barman who thought him drunk or crazy, and went out to see what was really going on. He was taken prisoner and held in the bridge watch house. At 1:25 the train from Wheeling was heard rumbling toward town and the watchmen ran to warn the engineers. The train was stopped and turned back by gunfire.

The first casualty of the conflict occurred when Shephard Hayward, a free black and a baggage handler for the railroad, walked across the racks to see what was happening. Shots rang out and he fell mortally wounded with a bullet lodged just below the heart. The first casualty of a war to free black people was a free black person.

Meanwhile the Wheeling train was waiting for some sign to either return to Wheeling or to proceed. Brown sent a message at 7am that the train could pass and it chugged across the two bridges. Brown must have forgotten that letting the train pass negated his cutting of the telegraph wires, and sure enough the train stopped at Monocacy and the conductor wired a horror story to the Baltimore train yard employees regarding one hundred fifty abolitionists who had take the Ferry, were freeing slaves, and arming themselves. The telegram made its way to W.P. Smith, the director of transportation for the railroad, who assumed something akin to mass hallucination and wired back for details of the situation. The telegram also made it to John Garrett, the head of the Baltimore and Ohio railroad, who knew deep in his gut it was real, and also felt that Brown was somehow mixed up in this ugly event. At 10:30 Garrett wired President Buchanan and Henry Wise Governor of Virginia with details and his own take on what was happening in the town. Preparations were immediately made for the movement of troops to the Ferry.

The latest that Brown could have stayed was noon on the 17th; thereafter the roads were clogged with troops from Maryland and Virginia—both federal and state militias—hurrying towards the scene. Brown was as static in the morning as he had been through the night; with morning light he had exchanged a hostage for breakfast from the Wager House Hotel, though he and his men ate nothing for fear of being poisoned. Meanwhile citizen soldiers had converged on the armory and arsenal from all points of the compass, and Brown—seeing their movements—suddenly snapped back into action. He ordered that portholes be cut into the walls to fire their

rifles from, and moved everyone into the engine house of the armory. He instructed his men to be frugal with their shot and powder, and to make every shot count. In the action men were called back from their posts on the bridges and at other strategic points in Harper's Ferry. While falling back, one of Brown's black soldiers, Dangerfield Newby, was shot and killed. The first raider casualty was a black man. There would be more.

That first day the battle was joined by around three hundred members of the local militias, arrayed against the ten or so men left in Brown's force. One raider had been captured in the early morning and was subsequently killed by a vengeful mob, while another of Brown's men had been killed by a point blank shot to the face. In both cases their bodies were left in the Potomac and used for target practice by militia members throughout the day. Owen, Brown's son, while peering out the doors of the engine house, had taken a bullet to the bowels. It took him twelve hours to die. Brown and his raiders were giving as good as they got, however, and the local militia commander, E.G. Alburtis, was not about to order a final rush on the armory. The militias pulled back to the bridges and waited for the federal troops to arrive and finish the job. The two raiders who were left in the arsenal had not fired a shot since early afternoon and as the sun set on the 17th, they snuck out of town, past the increasingly intoxicated mob, to return to the farmhouse they had rented and lived in, prior to the raid. Under flag of truce, a citizen had delivered to Brown a demand for his surrender, which he refused; offering instead hostages for safe passage to the Maryland side of the Ferry, which was also refused. Brown was now down to five uninjured men in the engine house, including himself.

Colonel Robert E. Lee and a company of ninety marines arrived shortly before midnight and set about arranging the final skirmish. Lee asked his lieutenant J.E.B. Stuart to approach the engine house under white flag and offer one last chance to surrender; if Brown refused Stuart was to make a signal and a company of the marines would force the door and storm the defenders. The plan worked and in the process Brown was wounded by a sword thrust to the side and several blows to the head, two of the other raiders were killed outright, and Watson—Brown's other son among the raiders—died later of a gunshot received during the battle. Brown's raid was ended, and like the Tet offensive one hundred years later, military defeat was about to be translated by the media and commentators into historical triumph.

Brown's composure throughout his imprisonment, trial, and execution was exemplary: he was firm, compassionate, and his presence commanded attention if not outright respect. Even the southerners who despised him couldn't help but feel they were in the presence of some elemental force. Henry A. Wise, governor of Virginia, said it all when he was asked about Brown's boldness, "He was the gamest man I ever met." Opinion in the nation was uniformly negative with one small, important exception, that handful of thinkers and writers who lived in and around Concord, Massachusetts: the Transcendentalists.

While not known for their political engagement, beginning in the 1850s the Transcendentalists found themselves half dragged by events and half forced by their own writings to take a more and more active (and pro-violence) stance against slavery. The passage of the Fugitive Slave Act of 1850 was the initiating event for

the Transcendentalists. Upon passage, Theodore Parker, close associate of Thoreau and Emerson, formed a vigilance committee to protect fugitive slaves and to hunt down and shame (or kill) slave hunters. This committee came into its own in 1854 with the capture of Anthony Burns, a fugitive slave who was to be returned south and was being held at the Boston Courthouse. Parker and Thomas Wentworth Higginson (one of the Secret Six) formed a rescue party and led a battering ram assault at the courthouse, setting off a scuffle with police in which one officer was killed. When the attack was repulsed, Higginson—wounded and bleeding—wanted to try again and accused his comrades of cowardice. Bronson Alcott, another transcendentalist not in on the attack but who happened to walk by as it was progressing and, with the withdrawal of the attackers, calmly spoke with Higginson, ascended the courthouse steps amid gunfire, and asked the cowed attackers, "Why are we not within?" When they failed to respond he slowly descended the steps, again ignoring the gunfire from the courthouse.

On July 4, 1854 a month after Burns had been returned to slavery, Thoreau was through with half measures and he threw the intellectual gauntlet down as loudly and brashly as he could. In a lecture reported in the press, he ran down a list of what ailed him:

The Fugitive Slave Act? "Its natural habitat is in the dirt with every form of venomous reptile."

The US Constitution? An outdated pro-slavery document.

The press? A gurgling sewer filled with "slime."

The United States? "I did not know at first what ailed me. At last it occurred to me that what I had lost was a country. My thoughts are murder to the state, and invol-

untarily I go plotting against her."

Emerson too found a political voice as a result of the slavery issue. He wrote of any nation that pursues fugitive slaves," I submit that all government is bankrupt, all law turned upside down; that the government itself is treason." His remedy is justice meted out by an armed and aware citizenry, and his example is California during the gold rush where anarchy and vigilante justice ruled. A situation he judged to be, "the best government that ever existed."

Brown met and wooed the Transcendentalists in 1857 during one of his swings through New England to raise money and enroll volunteers for Kansas. They immediately took to Brown, and comparisons between Brown and Cromwell fell thick and fast from many Transcendentalist pens in the coming year.

With Harper's Ferry, the entire range of national opinion abused Brown as a monster, maniac, molester of farm animals, and disturber of the peace. Even the anti-slavery press moved rapidly away from him, accusing him of being less than sane, even if well-meaning. Additionally, two of the Secret Six funders moved rapidly away from Brown, claiming they had no idea he was fomenting insurrection with their money. Fredrick Douglass even fled to England for a year to escape charges of complicity in the insurrection. Thoreau had seen and heard enough. People were running from Brown, but he would claim friendship and kinship with the old man, and he would defend him, in public. On October 30, just twelve days after the insurrection, Thoreau announced that he would defend Brown from the pulpit of Concord's First Church. The county Republican Party and the local anti-slavery committee called the idea "im-

politic" when informed by Thoreau of the lecture. He snapped back, "I did not send to you for advice, but to announce I am to speak." The address he gave, "A Plea for Captain John Brown' was a forceful vindication of the mission to Harper's Ferry and of Brown the Calvinist, sure of his moral compass in spite of the cowardice of the abolitionists and the evil of the slave holders.

Brown's trial lasted a week and in spite of some legal wrangling it was a clear he would be found guilty and hung. He was tried alone, but several of his men both white and black would also be tried and executed. Sentence was pronounced on Brown on November 2, and the date of execution was set for December 2. Prior to passing sentence the Judge had asked Brown if there were any reason why he should not be found guilty, and Brown responded with perhaps his best-known oration, which is presented here:

I have, may it please the court, a few words to say. In the first place, I deny everything but what I have all along admitted – the design on my part to free the slaves. I intended certainly to have made a clean thing of that matter, as I did last winter when I went into Missouri and there took slaves without the snapping of a gun on either side, moved them through the country, and finally left them in Canada. I designed to have done the same thing again on a larger scale. That was all I intended. I never did intend murder, or treason, or the destruction of property, or to excite or incite slaves to rebellion, or to make insurrection.

I have another objection; and that is, it is unjust that I should suffer such a penalty. Had I interfered in the manner which I admit, and which I admit has been fairly proved (for I admire the truthfulness and candor of the

greater portion of the witnesses who have testified in this case) – had I so interfered in behalf of the rich, the powerful, the intelligent, the so-called great, or in behalf of any of their friends – either father, mother, brother, sister, wife, or children, or any of that class – and suffered and sacrificed what I have in this interference, it would have been all right; and every man in this court would have deemed it an act worthy of reward rather than punishment.

This court acknowledges, as I suppose, the validity of the law of God. I see a book kissed here which I suppose to be the Bible, or at least the New Testament. That teaches me that all things whatsoever I would that men should do to me, I should do even so to them. It teaches me, further, to "remember them that are in bonds, as bound with them." I endeavored to act up to that instruction. I say I am yet too young to understand that God is any respecter of persons. I believe that to have interfered as I have done – as I have always freely admitted I have done – in behalf of His despised poor was not wrong, but right. Now, if it is deemed necessary that I should forfeit my life for the furtherance of the ends of justice, and mingle my blood further with the blood of my children and with the blood of millions in this slave country whose rights are disregarded by wicked, cruel, and unjust enactments – I submit; so let it be done!

Now it was the turn of the Transcendentalists to have their say. Thoreau, as we have seen, had already begun to praise Brown in his speeches. Now Emerson, perhaps the pre-eminent American intellectual—listened to, reprinted, and quoted ceaselessly by journals and other lecturers—began his defense of Brown. On November 8, Emerson spoke in the Music Hall in Boston to an overflowing crowd. He started by saying the South no longer

had a corner on courage, that Brown had shown, and continued to show himself, to be a man of substance and one unwilling to flinch even within sight of rope and hangman. Near the end of his speech he delivered the line that would follow Brown's memory throughout the nineteenth century,

> *That new saint, than whom none purer or more brave was ever led by love of men into conflict and death – the new saint awaiting his martyrdom, and who, if he shall suffer, will make the gallows glorious like the cross.*

The phrase "gallows glorious" still echoes, and in the heat of the trial and execution, it was restated, praised, and reviled across the US.

Brown was hung on the morning of December 2, 1859, in spite of numerous half-attempts at a rescue, including one by Lysander Spooner, the individualist anarchist, and an only-slightly-less-rabid abolitionist than Brown. Brown's wife collected the body and on the trip to North Elba, New York, the Brown residence and base camp for over a decade, she allowed one public viewing in New York City. Thousands lined up to see Captain Brown: the city, as would be seen in years to come, was deeply divided on slavery, the Republican Party, and this damn Brown fellow. Upon arrival home the family, in deep mourning for both the pater familias and the sons killed in the Harper's Ferry action, interred the body and purchased a headstone that still stands. Brown's favorite hymn "Blow Ye the Trumpet Blow" was sung (it fit perfectly with the man's ideals, as it praises and celebrates the year of jubilee when all human government shall be destroyed and celebration, happiness, and freedom will bless and exalt everyone).

Some Thoughts

The first striking thing about Brown and his life and times is the rather stark reality that the dominant system's contention—that terror is the last reserve of failed revolutionaries and the mentally ill—is proved utterly wrong. Brown didn't arrive at his own special form of insurrection as a result of a lifetime of failed uprisings, interminable meetings of the militants, and factional battles. Rather he got there as a result of his observation and study of previous slave uprisings, in themselves bloody and vengeful—as they should be—and in response to the very real terror of pro-slavery forces, in Kansas, on the floor of the US Senate, and throughout the South. Therefore the upheaval that was the Civil War began with terrorism, and concluded with full scale continent-wide belligerence. One is also reminded of the German guerrillas, the Rote Armee Faktion (RAF or Baader-Meinhof), and the June 2nd Movement (J2M), both of which attained their zenith of impact in the mid-70s. Most of the period of contestation in Germany was initiated by the riots surrounding the visit of the Shah of Iran to Berlin and Bonn, in which the police murdered a single demonstrator. Thereafter no significant mass movement rose to continue the propaganda and insurrection, rather a number of small networks of like-minded individuals came together and bombed, kidnapped, hijacked, and bankrobbed their way through German society. In the end this led to the very real tottering of the German state, as when one in three canvassed people indicated not only sympathy for the Baader Meinhof guerrillas, but also willingness to help them, if the chance came. The whole period culminates in the "Deutschland im Herbst" (Germany in the Fall)

crisis where the passengers on a hijacked plane parked in Somalia are to be exchanged for the jailed Baader, Ensslin, and others (Ulrike Meinhof had committed suicide in prison, months prior to the crisis). The situation was resolved with either the suicide of the RAF militants in prison, or their murder, depending on who is writing the history. The fact remains, however, that the Maoist RAF, and the anarchist J2M presented, for a year or so, the example of a two miniscule guerrilla movements effectively holding hostage state-capitalist society. Brown would have understood the dynamic, though the goal was beyond his time and place.

And then there are the Calvinists. For the Puritans—and one sees this in Cromwell and the regicides, the New Model Army, and many of the Ranters, Quakers, and others associated with the English Civil War and revolution—there was no higher law than conscience and an innate sense of morality. All external law, which contradicted conscience, was taken as heretical, unworthy, and ultimately to be ignored or overturned. One of the reasons the English revolutionaries pushed so hard was their complete faith in their own ability to perceive and translate the will of God into earthly reality. Here again, the Diggers, Ranters, and Fifth Monarchy Men all sought to realize a heavenly utopia here and now (or there and then). Even the revolutionary Parliament was not immune, and declared Jews, dissenters, and actors to be citizens. The same legislative body also suppressed the Church of England and sent Cromwell and the New Model Army to Ireland to slaughter and dispossess Catholics. Brown was clearly made of similar stuff, with his open tolerance of other faiths, and his bloody pronouncements concerning slaveholders and the South generally.

Finally there is the project of seizing territory and declaring it free and no longer subject to the laws of the US. This action, close to my heart and mind always, speaks the loudest as to who Brown was and what he was capable of. Simple arithmetic that tells me that as Capital begins to grind to a halt—a result of failed market expansion and the concomitant loss of petroleum products and fuels due to the deliberate exhaustion of natural reserves—that somewhere, someone will raise a flag, shoot a few members of the local constabulary, and declare their intent to be free of the whole mess. Quite simply the freeing of those enslaved to the wage and its twin, cultural insanity, is the next step in the process of Abolition, and one that we are coming closer and closer to realizing.

Curtains of Blood:

A Peek Behind the Phenomena of the Grand-Guignol

2013

Eyes wide open! Eyes wide open!
Do you not realize how much horror
is contained in those three words.

from "In the Darkroom" 1911
Maurice Level & Etienne Rey

The images conjured by the mention of the Theatre du Grand-Guignol are ominous—oozing madness, amorality run riot, blood flowing in the aisles by the bucketful, and intricate sadistic revenges. One imagines the conclusion of a night at the theatre off impasse Chaptal with patrons stumbling out into the night and vomiting on the curb, and one or two of the more suggestible types fainting outright in the street. A little theatre situated in the north of Paris with its own house physician to tend to patrons overcome by the images, content, and presentation of the performances. The truth, of course, is somewhat different than the image, but the image lives on in spite of the theatre's demise in 1962; the dearth of plays translated and available in English, or any language, other than French, for that matter; indeed the virtual loss of this entire theatrical tradition—considered by some as an example of incredibly bad French taste, like Jerry Lewis worship, taking the postmodernists seriously—or inadequate personal hygiene. Regardless, the Grand-Guignol seems as dead as one of its own brutalized and tortured victims... yet perhaps the real fear of death is contained not in its reality, but

in the ultimate distrust of the living that the dead won't really stay dead for very long. And so it goes...

History

Of course I didn't jump into Grand-Guignol without having the strong feeling that somewhere buried in there were some deep, twisted anarchist roots. The theatre was, after all, located just off the Place Pigalle, the natural habitat of bohemians, drug addicts, revolutionaries, prostitutes, proletarians, and assorted flotsam; and this in Paris—the Mother of Revolutions. And the timing—the final decade of the 19th and first decades of the 20th century immediately brings to mind the great anarchist terrorists Vaillant, Emile Henry, and Ravachol, and from the individualist anarchist menu, the Bonnot Gang, who, among other havoc raised, engineered and perfected the motorized bank robbery getaway.

And sure enough, without too much digging one uncovers the "Theatre Libre," the first artistic move towards what would become the Grand-Guignol. The Theatre Libre opened its doors in 1887, and presented comedies rosse, short plays that showed various aspects of the lives and language of workers and the underclasses. This theatre was above all meant as an experiment in naturalism, a theatrical philosophy that will percolate throughout the entire existence of the Grand-Guignol. The Theater Libre closed its doors due to bankruptcy in 1893, and one of its founders, Oscar Metenier, walked away from the whole experience with a few ideas. Why not stage what these Parisians appeared to enjoy? They read about violence, mayhem, and death daily in such scandal sheets as *Le Petit Journal*, the *Petit Parisien,* and the faits divers sections of newspapers, accompanied by graphic presen-

tations of the crimes described. Perhaps they'd pay to see some of the same. Further, what should ever really stop anyone from doing his best to offend the sensibilities of just about everyone? These two seemingly apposed notions co-existing side by side in an intimate theatre of two hundred eighty five seats and a stage measuring a meager twenty feet by twenty feet—may just yield some interesting artistic results, and a profit.

So Metenier opened the Theatre du Grand-Guignol in 1897. The name Guignol is slang for puppet, based in part on a popular puppet-character from Lyon (a Gallic version of Punch and Judy); therefore the Theatre of the Big Puppet. A brief note about the building: originally a Jansenist church, it was deconsecrated during the Reign of Terror and probably used for one of the area's political clubs, in the early nineteenth century it was a blacksmith's shop, then briefly a church again, an artist's studio, and then a theatre. A photo exists from 1947 of an audience watching one of the plays and in it one can see the interior is decorated with fleur de lis; one can also make out one of the two wooden carved angels that adorned the side panels.

From the very first season, Paris knew it was in for something new, an experience of theatre that wrenched you from your seat, that scared you out of your wits, offended your wife, and turned your stomach. One offering from the first two seasons shows a general direction, the play is called *Lui!* (Jack) authored by Metenier. In it two prostitutes are reading the *Petit Parisien* and commenting on the story of a fellow prostitute murdered and mutilated horribly by a customer. Eventually a knock comes at the door—a new customer, Jack. Of course everyone knows he's the killer—now it's just a question of time

and method, the emotional roller coaster starts to climb the hill. The younger of the two prostitutes takes Jack into her boudoir—he pays for champagne, sleeps a bit, she finds the proceeds from his previous murder as she shakes down his pants—and just as homicide draws near the police close in and arrest him. A close call, neither overly thrilling nor particularly erotic—but a nice start.

After two years Metenier handed control of the theatre over to Max Maurey, who, after familiarizing himself with Montmartre and its artists, turned to stamping the theatre as The Theatre of Fear. He was a master at playing on the public's impressions of the theatre and the hiring of the house doctor was done with much publicity and it figured in many of the early reviews. A cartoon from the era shows a doctor examining patrons before entry to ensure that they have a sufficiently stout constitution to withstand the horrors inside. Maurey loved the cartoon so much it was included in early publicity and playbill material. Metenier also introduced Maurey to André de Lorde who over the next two decades became the writer par excellence of the Grand-Guignol style. In virtually all GG revivals at least one, and occasionally several, of his plays are included. De Lorde always maintained a tone of naturalism in his works. As the plays became more bloody and horror-filled he sought help in looking into the souls and psyches of the insane and the criminal. As an example, one of his collaborators was the psychologist and Director of the Laboratory of Physiological Psychology at the Sorbonne, Alfred Binet, the developer of the Binet Intelligence test (and De Lorde's psychotherapist). I find this incredible—like having Jung on the set of the Texas Chainsaw Massacre to rework dialogue. A final example of this commitment to naturalism is the

content of the plays, which avoid all supernatural causation; no werewolves or vampires at the GG. Rather, what makes the plays so immediate is that much of the content is so damned possible: like being bitten by a rabid dog, or suffering a terrible vengeance by the hand of a jealous, crazed lover. Maurey also paid close attention to the unique stage tricks required to pull off a GG play. In this he was assisted by Paul Ratineau, effectively the theatre's stage manager, and a master of making the grisly happen (cheaply and effectively) on stage. The stage gags and tricks associated with GG are legendary and are written about by theatre professionals to this day. It is said that Ratineau and those managers who came later had perfected at least nine different types of stage blood. Note that each type was for different kinds of wounds, or effects, some flowed, some stuck to the skin, another type squirted. The most popular blood at the GG actually coagulated after application—it is known that this type required heating just prior to use and "scabbed" as it cooled. A neat fact understood by return patrons of the GG who, when they heard whispered from backstage, "Edmond quick! Warm the blood!," knew that things were going to get intense and soon. One other gag that was uniquely Guignol was the eyeball gouged from the socket. For this trick Ratineau used sheep eyes purchased from local butchers. They were drained of fluid and anchovies dyed red were placed (sewn? stapled?) inside. At the Grand-Guignol the stage eyeballs bounced when gouged and squirted horrifically when stomped on. Add to this the knives with retractable blades, scissors that squirted blood, artificial limbs hacked off, and you have an idea of what the audience so feared, and had paid to see. Recall also that these stage tricks were being done

within feet of the first row in the audience, and there were neither retakes nor do-overs—an eye gouge had to work for every performance, perfectly. Ratineau put his skills to making all these stage tricks effective. After he left the theatre, several other masters of the trade stepped in and developed upon his promising start.

The theatre and its troupe hit the big time, throughout the first decade of the twentieth century and right up to the start of the First World War. The Grand-Guignol became one of three theatre experiences on every tourist's list for Paris, the other two being the Comedie Francaise and the Folies Bergeres.

This period, written about ably by Zerzan in his *Elements of Refusal*, was one of economic expansion, solidarity, and working class agitation. The *ancien regime* in France and elsewhere cracked and split under the twin pressures of seething cultural and economic forces, the Third Republic showed increasing strain and even the election of Georges Clemenceau (an event equivalent to Obama's in many ways) from 1906 to 1909 could only slow the increasing rot at the core of the French state by offering a mild appeal to proletarian support.

The Theatre thrived in this era and defined itself against other theatrical experiences and even in some respects in contradiction to its own naturalist roots. The plays launched in this time included some of the tried and true guingoliere classics, *The Light Housekeepers* (1905, Autier and Cloquemin), *The Final Torture* (1905, DeLorde and Morel), and *The Final Kiss (*1912, Maurice Level). More on the plays later. One thing all observers agree upon is that the theatre fit into the neighborhood: an area of commercial sex work, of cocaine sniffing, hash smoking, opium-eating, absinthe-quaffing artists and

déclassé intellectuals, and of workers just beginning to feel their strength after the long interlude of somnambulism between the Commune and the reorganization of the Left via the Dreyfus Affair. Within a year of the beginning of the First World War, Maurey had sold the theatre to Camille Choisy and silent partner Charles Zibell. No explanation was ever given for the change, but the bloodletting in the trenches is said to have sickened Maurey and his early retirement may have been a general withdrawal from the world. He may also have felt that, after the global slaughter of millions, a Theatre of Horrors was redundant, or worse, boring.

Choisy had spent most of his life in the theatre performing in second-rate melodramas, though it was soon obvious that he was uniquely suited to administer the second decade of the Grand-Guignol. Of all his achievements perhaps the most singular is to have established a "star system" for his genre. He was responsible for the retention and marketing of L. Paulais and Paula Maxa, the two actors whose names are most associated with haute Guignol, who originated many of the roles most associated with the theatre. Maxa's autobiography contains an insider's perspective of the theatre during its apex of popularity. Very little is known of the actual stage presence or acting styles of these two, though much is made of the tortures they either perpetrated or endured on stage. It is said that Maxa, "was the most assassinated woman in Europe," and that she had died ten thousand times in sixty different ways, and had been raped three thousand times. Yes, raped—sexual violence featured prominently in the GG tradition and we will examine it later.

One of Choisy's many innovations for GG was to

move the acting into a more plastic and changeable paradigm. Thus at the beginning of a horror play, the acting may lean to the extremely natural, an almost lackadaisical acting style, but by the end as the horrors unfolded and the blood flowed the actors adopted an overtly emotional style characterized by sweeping hand/arm/shoulder movements, exaggerated postures, and wild facial contortions. In general, critics seem to regard this as a part of the theatre's change and growth—in the same way that German Expressionism would have its effect on the GG. *The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari* was produced in 1925, based loosely on the 1919 German film and authored by André de Lorde and a collaborator, Henri Bauche. There seems an interest on the part of the GG troupe to maintain the naturalist theatre method within the fact that what is happening in the plot is something other than the Natural: being blinded by two old women in a lunatic asylum, self-diagnosed with rabies, and so on. The emotional and physical response in the natural world to such an event would also be exaggerated, or off. Turn around on a roller coaster and observe the faces and bodies of the passengers behind you. What seems more likely is that this theatre of naturalism was experimenting with ways to bring the responses to horror into a relatively natural, at least explicable, acting paradigm. What resulted may have looked melodramatic—but it wasn't.

Choisy ran the theatre through 1928; his partner Zibell, facing bankruptcy, sold his share to Jack Jouvin in 1926. Jouvin and Choisy stayed together for two acrimonious though productive years. Choisy left thereafter and Jouvin, fearing that the success of Maxa could ruin the theatre, let her go in the same year. (Both Choisy

and Maxa found other work in the then thriving market of small theatres in Montmartre and over the years she would return for revivals and occasionally to work on new roles. Though it was said by the mid-1930s that her voice had suffered so much from her trademark blood-curdling scream that her skills were a mere shadow of her previous over-the-top victimhood.)

Jouvin assumed control during a particularly difficult time for the theatre, crowds were thinning and the notoriety, while still there, was no longer a palpable, unavoidable presence. Jouvin began substituting plays where physical violence was replaced with psychological and sexual menace. While not abandoning De Lorde completely (he staged a De Lorde play every year during his stewardship) Jouvin effectively removed the playwright as the literary force behind the theatre. Jouvin himself wrote a majority of the dramas during this period, but for all his hard work the theatre maintained its slow, barely perceptible decline. By 1938 it was over for Jouvin and the theatre was purchased by Eva Berkson, an Englishwoman who staged comedies until the Nazi occupation forced her to flee to England. Almost everyone believed that because of the Nazi presence the theatre would be closed until the liberation, but Choisy, perhaps reading the Germans better than most of the French, knew that those zany, bloodthirsty Nazis would just love a good Theatre of Fear. He, Maxa, and a few members of the old cast and crew reopened the theatre, and staged performances steeped in de Lorde and Metenier revivals. The Nazis were exactly what Choisy thought they were and proved just as receptive an audience as the Parisians. In fact, Hermann Goering attended at least one, and probably several, performances and

though the genre was not wildly popular; it was acceptable for the Nazi occupiers and censors and far enough from Vichy for the French Right (always an ominous presence) to pay little attention. So Choisy and crew had a grand run until 1944. Even the Allies proved susceptible; George "Blood and Guts" Patton, among others, attended the theatre after the Liberation.

Eva Berkson returned from England to reclaim her theatre in 1946, and there began the final downward slide—even the rehire of Paul Ratineau as director for the '46 and '47 seasons did nothing to halt the decline. The name Grand-Guignol had become something of a curse or theatrical albatross. The mood, post World War II, was very different from after the First World War—when the theatre had passed through its apex of popularity and growth. Audiences seemed less jaded, not more, as if a trip to the GG was a downer, like visiting a cynical and senile uncle. Part of this is clearly the infection of American culture into Western Europe.

The gee-whillikeristic worldview of the US troops and the assorted bureaucratic and ruling class flotsam sent to "revive" the Allied Countries via the Marshall Plan slowly became a raging cancer of anti-intellectualism, Christian moral sentiment, and Juicy Fruit Gum. Some of the most obvious victims of this infection were the GG, political and economic contestation, and any decent European-based scholarship for decades. America's Greatest Generation? Compared to what, primordial slime? I am reminded that Jacques Lacan began his seminars in 1951, and from the beginning the leering tri-circular face of Mickey Mouse seems an apropos symbol for his much-hailed return to Freud and those final years of his in Orange County—just minutes from Disneyland.

So by 1962 the theatre was finally closed—the last few years characterized by multiple owners—including Max Maurey's sons at one time—and countless vain attempts to recapture the attention and imagination of Paris, both of which Paris had been stripped, as a result of the triumph of global capital. The last performances were in November of 1962 and on January 5, 1963 all scenery and props were offered at public auction. Grand-Guignol was no more—sort of.

The Total Theatre Experience

One of the keys to the success of the Grand-Guignol, over and above its obvious attraction as The Theatre of Fear, was its cobbling together of a totalizing experience. From the movement through the urban space to the impasse Chaptal, to the design of the theatre and stage right through to the restraints and torture/death visited upon the victim—all created an increasing paranoia, a claustrophobia leading ultimately to a catharsis of almost sexual intensity. A few contemporary reviews of Grand-Guignol begin not with the lowering of the house lights; but with the walk from the Pigalle Metro station to the theatre. As an example, a review from the 1940s,

> *Leaving the Metro at Pigalle, you had to walk down the Rue Pigalle between the ranks of fishnet stockings and cigarette smoke, in the light of the neon signs and the sound of music that emanated from the clubs lining both sides of the street. At the crossroads you took a right turn down the rue Chaptal. The contrast was alarming; darkness and silence, a sad street, curiously barely lit, without any shops, deserted. You could hear the sound of your own footsteps on the pavement. Three hundred metres further along, suddenly emerging on your right,*

the cite Chaptal, a narrow dead-end alley… culminating in the barely-lit façade of the theatre.

In a view of the impasse Chaptal in daylight—note the narrowness of the alley, the termination of street into theatre. This narrowing or squeezing of perspective and space, with its accompanying restriction of movement, continues upon entering the theatre. The seating was designed such that most audience members, save the ones in the boxes at the rear or the balcony, were only a few feet from the stage. Then as we are squeezed into smaller and smaller spaces there is the stage of twenty by twenty feet, a cramped dark space lit (usually) with only splashes of light here and there to facilitate both the stage tricks and also the sense of dread and closeness, an escape-proof nightmare. Finally there is the play itself, which telescopes not only space but time. As the horror approaches, time bends—moves alternately fast and slow, inexorably carrying audience and players forward to the finale with its spurting blood and bouncing eyeballs. Note that most of the plays include some type of restraint as the torturer or assassin does his work. In *Crime in a Mad House*, two old insane women gouge out the eyes of a pretty new inmate from jealousy and to release the mockingbird they believe is imprisoned in her head. Note the precision of the movement, the grasping of both hands by one of the old women while the other hag does her grim work. Such restraint is critical to the success of the theatre pieces, and it takes many forms—in *Au Telephone* (1925, and you guessed it—DeLord, and collaborator Foley) restraint is a function of distance. The businessman Andre, away in Paris to complete some transaction, listens helplessly on the phone as his family is slaughtered by "tramps" at their

vacation home. Here the explicit inability to intervene—to stop the action and capture and punish the murderers is palpable. Andre is reduced to a spectator—another member of the audience as it were—experiencing just as the audience experiences, the horrible scene playing out on the telephone. As one approaches the theatre, the squeezing and narrowness, the claustrophobia and dread expanding in direct relation to the loss of movement, the helplessness of total restraint. The final piece of this movement is then the staged instrument of restraint itself, the hands of the insane old woman, the listening piece of the phone, the hand-cuff, the anesthetic, or the French Consulate in Peking hemmed in by Boxer Rebels—terminating in the denouement, the bloody and final scenario: Grand-Guignol's money shot. And the audience, as much as the restrained player on the stage, is helpless to intervene, to stop or slow the action, the feeling of being out of control, of falling into horror without benefit of either crash mat or helmet.

One of the consequences of this squeezing inward was to effectively push the audience onto the proscenium stage, simultaneously bringing the actors down into the audience, blurring the line between spectator and player. Paul Ratineau's sound design further facilitated this blur. He became a master of using minimal sound effects to great advantage, as in the explosions and far off sounds of struggle associated with *The Ultimate Torture*, which takes place during the Boxer Rebellion in a French Consulate. The rebels' approach to the consulate is evidenced both by script and sound, and again the space becomes rapidly smaller as this occurs. Ratineau found that he could also use sound effects from the rear of the theatre and these, while utilized

sparingly, had the effect of tearing down the fourth wall completely and turning the audience into one of the players, a character mostly silent and observant, but acknowledged and occasionally vocal. This tearing down of the Fourth Wall is also evidenced by the occasional comment from the stage to various audience members. Bernard Charlan, an actor, was to recall that during one performance he was distracted repeatedly by a couple in one of the booths who were engaged in some very heavy petting causing him to shout out from the stage, "You enjoy yourselves in there!" The audience also had something to say and as the theatre and its repetoire became increasingly familiar, a group of devotees sprang up called the guignoleurs. This amorphous group knew all the plays, actors, and probably some of the longer monologues, and were notorious for shouting out "Assassine!" at the antagonist, and could recite the number of faintings that had accompanied any given play. Hand and Wilson note that players and management alike, while not encouraging it, tolerated such heckling.

Another consideration is the suspension of disbelief, the real goal of many dramatists is the individual psychological response where what is happening on stage is taken not as art or representation but as fact—the Real. In one sense the number of faintings may be a base count to the number of persons who had suspended disbelief. As the authors above note, the suspension of disbelief was often followed by the involuntary suspension of consciousness. There is a video on youtube illustrating an audience morphing into performer (http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ehqqpDekEgA), it is of one of the Vienna Philharmonics New Year's Day concerts which always conclude with the Blue Danube, and

the Radetzky March. During the playing of the March the audience traditionally claps during the martial reprise. In this video, the audience has lost their motivation and the conductor Carlos Klieber turns slightly to the audience and waves his baton twice, as if to say, we are playing here—where are the hand claps required by this piece? The audience in response dutifully begins keeping time again. Finally there is a single piece of video available of a play from the Grand-Guignol (http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3dN06iALMTk), from the Italian shockumentary *Ecco*. The stage production presented is unclear, but appears to be a telling of a Bluebeard or Svengali type story, with an innocent and pretty young redhead as victim. In the piece one sees the Svengali character lure the woman to lie down, hypnotizing her. He then looks out into the audience—for two full beats—before returning to his victim and making a small incision on the arm closest to the audience. The victim rises slightly and screams, the Svengali character again re-hypnotizes the girl, reaches off-stage for a hacksaw—faces the audience a second time for two full beats—then proceeds to cut the arm off, which includes one final look into the audience. The effect of the glances at the audience are to bring us onto the stage, to make us feel a part of the action—and our identification is not with the victim and her impending doom, rather we are enticed onto the stage by the madman and in our joining the scene we become his silent accomplice.

The Play is the Thing

And what of content? What actually is in these plays? What would an evening at the Grand-Guignol be like?

Working in reverse order, an average playbill at the

Grand-Guignol would encompass between four and six twenty-minute plays; mostly one act, with an occasional longer offering. These then were staggered between a horror/drama/hallucination and a sex comedy. This mixture, dubbed "the hot and cold shower" was intended to wind the audience in knots—from the tingly anticipation of where the climax of the play may lead to raucous laughter grounded in a lightly erotic comedy: the application of emotional stress and anticipation relieved by the tonic of erotic play, a very Hitchcockian mix. And like Hitchcock, the Guignol troupe were cognizant of just where and when to raise the ante on horror for maximum emotional effect, and on eroticism, for the maximum of relief and détente thereafter. This formula, hot and cold, laughter and tension, was repeated at least twice, and sometimes three times, the finale of the last horror play (the end of the evening's performance) was always saved for the most disorienting, nasty piece of torture/death the troupe could produce. Thereafter, a few curtain calls, wild applause, and the audience leaves, glancing occasionally over the shoulder to make sure that none of the horrors from the theatre are following them home.

The plays themselves are difficult to render judgment on, primarily for the fact that so few have been translated into English. In all I count a total of sixteen, out of several hundred, that are currently available to an English-speaking audience or theorist and while many are considered "representative," it is doubtful that any such judgment could possibly be defended; our position is comparable to the man who has fallen from the terrace of the Empire State Building who was heard to remark while passing the 37th floor, "So far, so good." An accurate assessment at the time, but more data will

reverse the judgment. So let's look at a few plays...

The Ultimate Torture cited above deals with a handful of colonials trapped in the French Consulate presumably in Peking during the Boxer Rebellion. The political content is almost pure Gallic xenophobia, the classic Western European "yellow peril" scenario. Assorted soldiers, volunteers, and the consul D'Hemelin make up the visible contingent in the drama. Behind a door are the women and children, including Denise, D'Hemelin's daughter. As the Boxers draw closer D'Hemelin lets on that he will kill his daughter rather than allowing her to be raped and tortured by rebels. Bornin, a Russian who had earlier tried to get through the Boxer lines to safety, returns with his hands cut off. He describes the tortures that await those who fall into the Boxers hands: fingernails pulled out, eyes gouged, decapitation. Then he dies. D'Hemelin brings his daughter out from the offstage room, begs her forgiveness, and shoots her in the heart. As the battle sounds grow louder, the inmates of the consulate realize that it is the forces of the Western powers fighting to get through to those trapped in the embassies and consulates. D'Hemelin realizes his terrible mistake and slips into inconsolable guilt and then insanity—the ultimate torture.

The Final Kiss (Maurice Level, 1912) is classic revenge Guignol, and probably the best-known and most re-worked piece of drama from the theatre. Henri's ex-fiancée Jeanne in a jealous rage threw a bottle of vitriol (sulfuric acid) on Henri's face disfiguring him grotesquely. He testifies for her in court and after serving a short six-month sentence she is released. He writes a letter to her begging her to come and visit him. She does, they both taunt and flirt with each other and fi-

nally Henri secures her in his arms, opens a bottle of vitriol and dumps it on her face. She falls screaming in agony and Henri pronounces himself revenged and says that they are both now alike—the perfect couple. His last words in the play are "Like me! Like me!" as he removes his bandages so the audience can get a good look at the too-gruesome couple. Again, a very interesting piece for many reasons. Note that his line comparing the two as the same is very true. She now resembles him physically and he has disfigured himself by the act of vengeance, which in turn now resembles her own tortured inner-self. This play was reinterpreted in the comics, one could say almost lovingly, by Al Feldstein and William M. Gaines, with drawings by Jack Kamen in the EC comic, *The Haunt of Fear*, Issue 11, January 1952. The title of the graphic interpretation—The Acid Test. Finally the Kids in the Hall filmed their take on the play and it may be the best adaptation so far, a recommended guilty pleasure (http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9QlBFpfShJc&feature=related).

The Lighthouse Keepers (Paul Autier and Paul Cloquemin, 1905); Father and son are lighthouse keepers on their first day of a full-month, no-outside-contact, stint at a remote island lighthouse. As the play progresses the son begins to develop many of the symptoms of rabies, which is bad because a dog bit him before they left. Finally the father kills the son before he becomes a raging hydrophobe. The horror is that father must now spend a full month in close quarters with the decomposing corpse of his son before the relief boat returns.

The Torture Garden (Pierre Chaine and André de Lorde, 1922; from the novel by Octave Mirbeau). Mirbeau was an anarchist who was identified, among other

things, with the extreme journal *The Social War* and any number of anti-democratic publications. The novel *The Torture Garden*, while a bit decadent, also has a glimmer of anarchist thought. The play is based on the final section of the novel, which tells the journey through Asia of a minor French diplomat Jean Marchal. He encounters and becomes enamored of Clara, who may or may not be a secret agent, but who is definitely the far side of wild—a sexual adventurer and sadist. In the play Marchal kills Li-tong, a servant of the mandarin Han and one of Clara's many lovers. Marchal and Clara visit the Torture Garden (off stage) where numerous ingenious tortures are interspersed with elaborate floral displays, and in the penultimate scene a woman is tortured by flaying while Clara, observing the torture, has a toe-curling orgasm and faints. Finally, the secret anti-mandarin, and perhaps socialist/anarchist Red Dragon Society, which includes the woman previously being flayed, take Marchal and Clara prisoner. Marchal is lead to safety; having killed Li-Tong he is a hero of the Red Dragons. Clara, having been unveiled as an agent of Han, is then subjected to hot needle torture as the curtain descends.

Some Musings

First, it must be said that I can find no discussion of the Grand-Guignol anywhere by any theorist of note—which is odd, given where and when it was. Not even the avant-garde, Dada, Surrealist axis had much to say. The same with the politicals. Sartre, Deleuze, and the Situationists are stonily silent on the Grand-Guignol, which is a real clue that somewhere in there is hiding something interesting. There are two very different ways that critical theorists interact with horror as a cul-

tural artifact. First, it is named as irretrievably reactionary, as individuals trying to break outside of bourgeois morality are slaughtered and tortured to drive them back into the arms of Capital and society—think early slasher cinema where hormone-redolent teens have sex and then endure decapitation by masked maniacs.

Then there is the other side. Emma Goldman started this critical engine, where each of the tortures shown is merely a reflection of the brutalization rampant in society and hence horror is a mirror held up to the fanged and drooling visage of Capital.

But Guignol falls outside both of these. First, while revenge is a part of many of the dramas, there are a significant number that are utterly amoral—Good does not triumph, Evil has its way, and that's just how it is. And in the revenge pieces there is a certain symmetry to the vengeance, hence the acid-scarred face of Jeanne pays back Henri's disfigurement, or Clara's death by torture avenges her sadistic fantasies made real. No one returns to the bosom of society, unlike the heroines in the slasher films, who, though injured, live to fight on in the sequel. There seems to be little in the plays that even implies that they are to be taken as examples of the brutalization of Capital. Clara, who may be bourgeois, hangs out in the roughest bars in Asia, loves torture, and has a Chinese lover; hardly an identifiable ruling class villainess. Additionally there is not a single play I could find that included a maiming or death by a machine, or as a result of greed—which would have made an obvious statement about the dehumanization of society. So classic critical theory as applied to horror seems worthless when discussing what went down at the Theatre du Grand-Guignol.

But what is relevant? First, I believe, is the incredible competence of the pieces as written and as played. GG was a writer's theater—the written and spoken word, plot, and nuance brought each play to a unique level of craftsmanship and consistency. There is a coherence to the classic Guignol plays that one rarely encounters in other theater ensembles, or even within the oeuvre of any given playwright. This expertise is matched by the actors, who played day-in and day-out some very difficult pieces, spanning the range from light sex farce to grim blood-streaked hallucination daily, twice daily for matinees. Finally the stage manager and effects crews provided an example of excellence and experimentation to make the unreal real.

And where does all this theatrical competence lead? To making the audience believe that what is happening on stage, is happening. This mystique still holds, decades after the last curtain call. As I was preparing this essay a friend asked about any accidents during performances where actors might have been harmed. And that question asked in 2012 really is the crux of the thing; when you have so successfully abolished disbelief, and in this case instilled foreboding, then you have achieved the artistic goal, the raison d'être for the whole endeavor. There is to this day a haunted fear that at the Guignol victims really were dismembered and flayed and had acid dumped on their faces.

Odd that anarchism has a similar effect, where long past the heyday of Haymarket, and the IWW, and the Up Against the Wall Motherfucker chapter of SDS, that the word *anarchy* today produces a similar haunted political fear in the uninitiated. In the case of anarchism, however, the real glue that sticks it to the popular con-

scious is made up of either the dread of a lawless, stateless society (chaos?), or the example of anarchists as being nothing if not committed, principled, and relentless political opponents capable of just about anything. Horkheimer mentions just such a mechanism in *The Eclipse of Reason* when he illustrates how the dominant culture, in order to limit dialogue to acceptable parameters, makes some words and concepts virtually unusable and thus, he continues, these words revert to their magic form: becoming something feared, unmentionable—the darkness on the other side of the Real. And Capital and its media, in the final twist, portrays them as such in order to decisively relegate them to oblivion.

One difficulty when dealing with Grand-Guignol is the damned ambivalence of the whole experience, its utter lack of pretension and silence on larger historical or spiritual forces. There is an amorality to many of the plays that stretch the very meaning of the word. The very silence is thundering, on all things social, political, and economic, particularly given the theatre's geography and background. It struck me that perhaps this is not a measured, Gallic ambivalence (schadenfreude?) on the part of the writers, players, and management. Perhaps this is a choice, a deliberate refusal to play the guessing game of politics and ideology. And if it is a choice, a stubborn refusal in light of all that's wrong with both left and right in France, then perhaps the Guignol was for several decades the post-left institution par excellence in Europe. Note here that this type of refusal, far from being a further sign of alienation and hence Capital's doing, moves beyond the Žižekian Ur-belief that all things ring when struck—with the chime of ideology. Rather, there are glaring examples of people, in-

stitutions, and events that move in a critical fashion beyond the confines of severe ideological constraint. Does this resonate then, almost palpably, with the greater and greater narrowing of movement, perspective, and time noted in the Grand-Guignol total experience? Also it is necessary to dispel the one objection that such a choice could be motivated by an "art for art's sake" justification. This is possible, that the removal of the theatre and its works beyond the realm of ideology may indicate the simple avarice of the owner who would rather count money than worry about theory—and this moves the theatre back into the realm of Capital and hence ideology. The problem is that such a choice inherently also places the theatre squarely onto the false shifting battleground of left and right—and if that's the case where then is the play extolling the virtues of the proletariat...or the French army? They don't exist, and you can't have one (the non-choice of left—right) without the content to echo it (the patriotic or revolutionary play). So, taking this refusal of politics as a post-political statement as fact for a moment, what does the theatre provide us as an example of a post-left institution? First, as mentioned, the theatre was precociously meticulous in its craft, its survival was a function of its integrity. Second, it was blind to class in its appeal: on any evening minor Magyar aristos sat next to absinthe-besotted artists. Third, the plays were written to be both intellectually and sensually communicative, whether you were disgusted by the blood (the irrational) or by the rapid, effective plotting (the rational), the emotive result was the same—fear. Last, there was a coherence between the psychogeography of the city, the theatre, and the context, the fact that at the termination of the impasse

Chaptal a theatre rose up out of the street, a theatre of fear, blood, and sperm such that none other could have taken its place at that time, is testified to by history.

And the Now Question

So what of now? Where are the cultural repercussions of the Grand-Guignol today? Before the answer, a disclaimer. Yes, all horror films, horror stories written since 1920, and all other horror cultural artifacts have some small piece of Grand-Guignol in them, even the current middle-east war which looks more and more like a decades-long snuff film than it does the real tragedy that we feel must be happening, has also some Guignolesque moments. However, there are only a select few pieces of culture that look and feel like the Guignol; as an example the 50s French film—*Eyes Without A Face*, especially the gruesome face-lift scene, and the death of Louise by scalpel. In yet another French film, *Les Diaboliques*, particularly the scene where the not-so-dead husband Delassale rises out of the bathtub and scares his ex, the not-so-widowed Christina, to death. I'll be hated for saying it, but Alice Cooper and his earlier permutation as necrophiliac, the stage antics with guillotine and babies, and his use of makeup are all very Guignol-esque. The uber-zine *Answer Me!* presents some very apt Guignol moments particularly in the Rape and Suicide issues. And speaking of rape, where does sexual violence fit in with all this. In the Guignol plays, my understanding is that the victims were mostly nuns and virgins, thereby a dual stigma is attached to the violation. The act transgresses not only juridical law per se, it also violates moral, religious, and traditional sexual codes, thereby increasing its impact twofold. The

question remains—was the Grand-Guignol misogynist, or purely misanthropic, such that when it came to women, men, and sexual mores the greatest violation possible was chosen, at the artistic level. I have no answers for this question, but will state that revulsion is revulsion regardless of what act is being presented, whether torture or rape. And revulsion, terror, and fear were the emotive destination of any Grand-Guignol drama. Finally the new film God *Bless America* directed by Bobcat Goldthwait has some purely Guignol moments and is recommended for your viewing pleasure. In one scene a victim is attempting to elude Frank and runs into a butcher knife held by Roxy, the teen protagonist. Roxy's face is sprayed by blood from the wound, and after the victim falls she raises her hands in an adolescent victory hand pump, like one sees at high school football games—brilliant.

So, there it is, the Grand-Guignol with all its warts and wounds attached. Is there a place for such a theatre now? Probably, especially if attuned to the mess we find ourselves in, and not as some lame mirror held up to current social mores and economic privation. Rather as a theatre that pushes the false options of left/right, good/bad into the background, and brings to center stage a language and content grounded in what will be necessary to destroy this whole mess, and to ensure it never, ever returns.

Review of *American Uprising*

American Uprising: The Untold Story of America's Largest Slave Revolt, Daniel Rasmussen (Perennial Books, New York, 2011). 276 pp., $26.99 hardcover/$15.99 paper.

So, to keep the rhetoric and material in *Modern Slavery* alive with tales of slave revolts and insurrections, I inadvertently picked this book up while on my way through some airport somewhere. After looking at the young face of the author, reading that his alma mater was Harvard, and that he had received a number of prizes during his years there, my worries grew; surely this couldn't be a book that demonizes slaves for revolt? Harvard is a primitive place, but could it have reverted even deeper into the muck of ruling-class snobbery, inbred genetic mutation, and bad nicknames? Finally I relented and bought the damn thing—what the hell, it's better than watching the movie on the plane.

Dangerous Cargo

The author begins by focusing on the night of Epiphany, January 6, 1811, and details the extravagant balls, meals, and gambling of the local white slave-owning gentry who lived in or near New Orleans. Epiphany of course is the kickoff for the entire annual Carnival season that culminates in the liver-ossifying orgy of Mardi Gras. Simultaneously with the celebration of the masters, he describes the revelry of the local slaves gathered on the Commons in the city. Perhaps as many as five to six hundred individuals all told were present, and they danced in large circular formations, drank local fermented

products, and crowned a king for the event, even as the local gentry crowned their own Rex for Mardi Gras. The slaves however also plotted to pull the whole economic and political superstructure down by armed rebellion.

The planters were men who had abandoned Enlightenment era France for the possibility of huge profit and reward as a result of hacking some kind of living out of the wilderness. Sugar, as it turns out, was the right crop for the areas directly west of New Orleans that ran along the northern banks of the Mississippi River. This area, named the "German Coast," was famous for its heat, humidity, snakes, and swamps. Many planters justified the use of African slaves as a result of this harsh environment. The transport of slaves to the US was outlawed in 1808, but it is estimated that in the forty years prior to the passage of the law proscribing importation of slaves, as many as twenty four thousand Africans were disembarked in New Orleans. The mortality rates of the slave trade are staggering. Forty percent of those captured never even made it to the west coast of Africa for transportation, ten percent perished during the Middle Passage, and only about a third would survive through the first four years in the New World.

There is another side to this, though, and it shouldn't be overlooked. Many of those who survived were some very tough customers indeed. The two slaves most associated with the German Coast Revolt are Kook and Quamana. The names suggest that the men were Akan, an African empire at the height of its power in the late eighteenth century; essentially a military union of a number of different tribes. The Akan controlled significant tracts of land throughout modern Nigeria, Benin, Togo, and Ghana. Many of the Akan slaves brought to

the US were common soldiers who had been trained to make up the impressively large armies that African nations at that time fielded in warfare. It is likely, therefore that Kook and Quamana at least knew how to use weapons, and very probably had been trained to fight, even if they had never gone into battle.

The real touchstone for these rebels, as it was for John Brown, was the success of the Haitian Revolution in 1803, which, as noted elsewhere freed the slaves, granted independence to the island nation, and, as if to put paid to the whole deal, banned all French citizens from Haiti—forever. News and refugees from Haiti flowed into southern US ports, and New Orleans had its share of hair-raising accounts of slave violence and degradation told by disgruntled plantation owners and lackeys who lost it all when the rebels occupied Port-au-Prince. The planters of the German Coast were stunned, and in response formed many local units and militias specifically to respond to possible slave rebellions.

Of course, 1803 fits prominently into the story in another way, for as Napoleon was losing his colony, the US president Jefferson was eyeing the purchase of some fire-sale real estate in the Gulf Coast area. Jefferson sent Robert Livingstone to France, where he negotiated the purchase of Louisiana (effectively a third of the US—from New Orleans to Montana, roughly) for 15 million dollars, just nineteen days after beginning negotiations. Livingstone accepted the offer without having first contacted Jefferson, assuming that he would approve, which he did a few weeks later.

Jefferson sent William Claiborne to be its first territorial governor, and he could not have chosen more poorly. Claiborne was a true patriot, small-minded,

leery of foreigners, unable to speak French or Spanish, and uniquely unsuited to handle the arrogant French planters. At a ball he attended with some of his kaintucks (unflattering Creole patois for American) he called for a few English dances prior to the traditional French ones, and nearly started a riot.

A Period of Gestation

So things simmered along nicely for a few years, with silent communication continuing among various slaves and groups—facilitated by the balls and events of the masters—as did planning and waiting for the right moment to strike. In this period the final, and perhaps the most interesting, member of the revolt was recruited, Charles Deslondes. Charles was a light-skinned, mixed race man born on the Deslondes plantation and hence given the master's last name. He had risen swiftly through the slave hierarchy to become a driver: the person responsible for taking orders from the master and translating it into the day's work for the slaves.

Slave drivers were notoriously conservative and traitorous to the cause of slave rebellions, and were one of the reasons that so few revolts ever really got off the ground, as they informed quickly on any potential plots. The slave drivers did everything from carrying keys to all the doors of the plantation, to supervising the complex process of extracting and granulating sugar from cane juice, to handing out punishment to recalcitrant slaves. It also seems that the drivers were often the vehicle whereby discontented slaves could air grievances without resorting to murdering the master. Many times slave drivers sought to smooth over tensions between slaves and masters and in this sense were the very epit-

ome of collaborationists, but not Charles Deslondes. He continued to play the role of driver but in his heart there was rebellion, and he was perfectly situated at his master Manuel Andry's plantation to light the flame of revolt.

Andry, as it turns out, was notorious for his cruelty to his slaves and this may have been one of the reasons that Charles was pushed into rebellion. It is also a nice anecdotal refutation of Marx's class theory, as Zerzan and others have pointed out and as history repeatedly shows: those with the most to lose often make the deepest and most radical revolutions. Regardless, when the time came for the signal Deslondes wouldn't look back for an instant.

News and plans passed up and down the German Coast through a political cell organization constituted of like-minded slaves, cells of those recently imported from Africa, and a large cell of English speaking slaves. No written plans were ever discovered after the revolt had been put down. Other than freeing the slaves, we can only guess as to the larger goals of the rising. One guess is that as New Orleans was the nearest and largest city, and a hub of power and commerce, and as the slaves immediately set out towards the metropolis, that there was at least a thought as to a wider political agenda. Capturing the city was certainly on the minds of many of the co-conspirators. In interrogation the captured rebels were silent. They knew that whether or not they talked, they would all die, so there was little motivation to snitch. One slave under interrogation suposedly stated that the goal was to kill all whites. Possibly, but this also has the ring of planter propaganda, used to justify the bloodbath and decapitated heads on poles that were the final stop of many of the revolutionaries. At a meeting of three of

the conspirators during the Epiphany celebrations it was decided that January 8, 1811, a Thursday, would be the date to turn their world upside down.

On the night of the 8th, Charles summoned his cell of twenty five slaves together and made some final plans and adjustments. The decision to open the battle at the Andry plantation was tactical and symbolic. The Andry plantation was virtually the last outpost before the Mississippi banked north and away from the German Coast. It was the furthest from New Orleans as well, meaning that the rebels would travel down through a virtual alley of plantations and potential recruits before facing the earthen walls of the city.

The Rebellion

Charles led the slaves into the Andry mansion, where Manuel and his adult son Gilbert were sleeping. The night had been rainy, and hence the movement of the rebels had been effectively covered by the wind and splash. Awakening Manuel, the rebels attempted to capture or kill him, but Andry understanding instinctively what was happening, ran through the milling rebels receiving a number of superficial slashes as he did so. He continued down the staircase and did not stop until he made the next plantation. Deslondes believed that he couldn't make it too far in his wounded and scared condition and so did not order a chase. Deslondes was convinced that there was indeed to be a reckoning with his former master and was willing to wait for that moment. Survival, however, was not in the cards for Gilbert, who was hacked to death by his former chattels.

The liberated slaves formed themselves into marching columns; Deslondes rode a horse commandeered

from the Andry stable and proclaimed, "On to New Orleans." And so the march began. The seed of rebellion had been well-planted. As the insurrectionists passed plantation after plantation the various slave quarters were abuzz with the debate: whether to join or to stay behind in safety. In rapid succession small cells, well primed with revolutionary slogans and bearing all manner of farm implements as weapons, sprang out of the rain and gloom to join the marching rebels. At one plantation, owned by the local judge Achille Trouard, the rebels were greeted by ten slaves, one of whom, a man named Mathurin, was on horseback. As they marched to within earshot they saw Mathurin wave a sword high in the air and pledge life and limb for the cause of Charles and revolution. Mathurin had bad news too. Seems his master had been warned and managed to escape with the entire Trouard family into the swamps that surrounded the well-groomed sugar fields. Not only were the slave lines of communication open and humming, the planters were beginning to get a sense that something very wrong was descending on New Orleans from the German Coast. Treachery also begins to play a role in the revolt at this time too, as collaborationist slaves began to inform their masters of the plot and encourage them to either flee to New Orleans or hide in the swamps.

As the rebels drew nearer to New Orleans, a new type of discontented, racially-ambivalent population, the maroons, joined the army. These men and women were slaves, indentured whites, and dispossessed Native Americans who had escaped into the wilderness and swamps and who lived in a continual uneasy stalemate with the local white gentry. They were well acquainted with the region and knew just where and when a retreat

into the bayou would yield effective escape from the planters, should the rebellion backfire. They were also handy with gun and pistol, and given the chance could make every shot count.

Much has been written of maroons and maroon societies. John Brown was fascinated by them and used at least one or two maroon uprisings as guides when he was crafting his own rebellion. The maroons were notorious for not only being dangerously alienated from the surrounding dominant culture, but looking upon the local variations of racism as a curse. In most maroon communities blacks, Native Americans, and whites mixed in easy company as fighting companions and sexual partners.

It's hard to imagine a more terrifying image to the local white gentry than the hundreds of risen slaves joined and abetted by the local maroons who inhabited the swamps and fens of the Mississippi delta region. The planters knew that should the rebels win, no mercy could be expected from the victors, and it steeled their response to the rising to the point of uncontrollable cruelty.

Kook and Quamana were waiting at the plantation of the Trepagnier's, and their absorption into the rebel force heralded the final addition of conspirators. The rebellious army was complete, time to begin moving in a determined way towards New Orleans, and battle, and freedom.

Francois Trepagnier, not fearing any slave—he considered them some kind of animal, and even kept a small boy named Gustave as a pet, throwing him scraps from the table for amusement—loaded up some shotguns, set himself in the second story window of his mansion and waited. What he saw advancing in the early morning air was the stuff of planter nightmares,

several hundred slaves, organized into companies and each commanded by a black officer on horseback. Francois had made his decision and started firing as rapidly as possible into the marchers. Kook ran quickly around to the undefended rear of the house, broke down a door and ascended to the second floor and set about hacking the planter to bits.

One early myth of the rebellion is that Gustave was given an ax by onlookers and that he too exacted revenge for the years of abuse he had suffered at the hands of the white vermin who persumed to own him.

The conspirators organized the lines of marchers more tightly and using knowledge of war gained on the African continent, set off to bring freedom to the American gulag. The night had grown quite late and many in the rebel army were for slowing or even resting prior to the assault on New Orleans.

At about the same time a small group of younger male slaves joined the throng. This cell, headed by a man named Simon, brought with them new energy and were eager to get to New Orleans and finish the job. Their enthusiasm proved to be infectious and the entire army caught a second wind for what might be the last day of the rebellion or the first day of real freedom. The murder of Francois Trepagnier had been very much a test for the rebels. They had killed one of the most hated planters on the German Coast and they hoped that rumors of the execution would spread far and wide to instill in their foes the fear and doubt needed to overcome the well-armed and trained white militias.

The rebels moved to within a few miles of New Orleans as the guardians of law and order finally started to make some plans as to how to deal with the looming

threat. Claibourne and the other government representatives were less concerned with the distant army than they were by the fact that blacks—free, slave, and indentured—outnumbered whites in the city by almost two to one. What the men really feared was a simultaneous assault from the rebel army outside the city gates, and a race riot within. This would effectively open a second front, making holding the town virtually impossible.

The governor and his men quickly cut off all slave movement across the bridges in the hopes that this would eliminate communication between the belligerents. Next Claibourne closed all the drinking establishments in the city, judging perhaps rightly, that the loose company and morals of the bar denizens might flow forth in new lines of contestation and violence. Simultaneously the movement of refugees into New Orleans began to swell from a few stragglers to hundreds of plantation owners and their families, employees and skilled white laborers, all assisted in their flight by collaborationist slaves. Over the next six hours local militia commander General Hampton managed to organize two companies of the local militia and thirty regular soldiers who had been stationed in the city as a sort of police/surveillance detachment.

The naval commander, Commodore Shaw, realizing the weakness of Hampton's forces, and also knowing that his ships would be worthless in the still-pouring wind and rain took the decision to disembark his sailors and to turn them into infantry. As these various official contingents began to encounter the planters fleeing towards the city, they found that once the masters had found safe accommodation for their family, possessions, and slaves, they would sometimes turn their horses

around and join the various military units. In this way a company of cavalry appeared virtually out of nowhere and strengthened even further the ability—and the will—to resist the oncoming forces of rebellion.

The various military detachments headed out back into the German Coast, at one point coming across a large contingent of rebels sheltering between two buildings used for sugar extraction. Thinking this group to be the entire rebel force, plans were laid and infantry and cavalry charged into the midst of the gathered slaves. It was too late, though. The rebels—undoubtedly hearing the men and horses—had evaporated back into the night, a classic guerilla tactic: fight only if you can win, move away if overpowered, outgunned, or outmanned. The slave army began to move quickly back into the dark and fog of the German Coast, away from the erstwhile prize of New Orleans. Again, classic guerrilla strategy: move the enemy into your environment, where you know the placement of every tree and sinkhole, and then exhaust and kill them. Make the enemy chase you, preferably in the dark when a musket aimed from behind a tree can do as much damage as it can on a well-lit battlefield, but where there is cover from incoming bullets.

The final act was orchestrated upriver by the one man that the slaves had let live. Manuel Andry, bleeding and half-dead, and mourning the slaying of his son, made his way across the river to the home of Charles Perret. Here he was bandaged, and then gathered a force of about eighty planters, all armed to the teeth and motivated by the raving Andry who predicted the worst if the slaves—any of the slaves—were left alive.

This force then traveled back to the other side of the river and waited, knowing by sounds of shooting

and movement that the rebels were heading directly for them, back up the river. At about nine in the morning of January 9, 1811, the planters watched as the rebel forces marched straight into the trap. The planters had effectively flanked the slaves to the rear, and none of the slave strategists could have guessed that any German Coast resident, especially the wounded and howling Andry, could mount a counterattack after the mayhem caused by the rebels as they marched on New Orleans.

Once sighted by the rebels, the battle was joined. Each group drew up into battle formation with slaves outnumbering the forces of law and order by two to one. Neither side hesitated nor flinched, both knowing that whoever won would take a terrible vengeance on the vanquished. Within the first few minutes of battle, however, the victory was assured for the planters as the ammunition of the rebels began to run out. More and more black bodies fell in the early morning light, and finally the planters' cavalry charged into the wavering lines of rebels.

Many rebels stood their ground, while the remainder headed to the swamp with hopes of getting past the screaming white banshees. In their ears they could hear the screams and cries of their brethren being dismembered by the Christian patriots. Only about twenty five slaves survived to actually be put on trial, including Kook and Quamana. The planters had brought with them their slave-chasing bloodhounds and these led the planters into the depths of the swamp and right to Charles Deslondes.

He did not escape. According to one witness the militiamen chopped off Charles' hands, broke his thighs, shot him dead, and then roasted his remains on a pile of straw. Charles died a martyr to his cause, and his death

cries, heard by captured and hiding rebels alike, carried the message of a freedom won and stolen back in a few short hours.

Plantation Justice

Reprisals continued unabated for several days, as the militia continued their hunt for rebels. Upon capture the militia did more than murder, they hacked off the heads of the captured rebels and delivered them, by the sack, to the Andry estate. From there the heads were taken to points all along the German Coast and placed on poles. In cases where rebels were captured, a truncated judicial proceeding was planned and implemented. Kook and Quamana survived the initial bloodletting in the cane-fields-turned-killing-fields. The planters had a special plan for these men who, by virtue of their military dress, were easily implicated as being leaders of the rebellion.

Each of the captured slaves was questioned by a committee of planters to determine who had participated, and to ascertain if any of the conspirators were still at large. The results of the interrogations are interesting. Many slaves were willing and able to implicate others without torture; a number were willing to take full responsibility for their actions, while refusing to inform on their comrades. Kook and Quamana fall into the latter category, refusing to talk about any of the other rebels. For themselves, Kook admitted to killing Francois Trepagnier with an axe, thereby assuring his own death. Quamana admitted to participating and whenever possible to having assisted in the organization of the rebellion, but was silent as to the participation and activities of any other slave. Deslondes, it will be remembered, was savagely murdered on the day the rebellion was

put down, so death had sealed his lips to any confession forever. In all, some eighteen slaves were found guilty, though of what exactly is missing from the records. The charge could have been anything from fomenting insurrection; being black and desiring freedom; thinking for oneself. The glaringly blank space for what exactly the crimes of the rebels were, is one of the more interesting and ironic twists of this history. By the end of January around one hundred dismembered bodies were displayed from the Place d'Armes in the center of New Orleans along the River Road for some forty miles into the heart of the plantation district. Commodore Shaw wrote of the grisly process,

> *Condemnation and execution by hanging and beheading are going daily; our citizens appear to be again at ease, and in short, tranquility is in a fair way of being established.*

Aftermath

Of the many repercussions of the rebellion, one of the more interesting is the change that it effected in the perceptions of the planters about the role and estimation of Governor Claibourne, and the rest of the kaintucks. Before, the arrogant Creole bourgeoisie had treated the local US representatives as yet one more group of claimants to power to be ignored and vilified, as they had the French and the Spanish. This changed overnight into a recognition that the US, and especially its military arm, could prove quite important if the slaves should ever rise again.

Next, they also were not blind to the fact that regardless of the dubious legal machinations whereby a few hundred slaves had been murdered, no one in the

American administration was willing to question, or even investigate, what amounted to mass murder. All of this came to a head with a call for the increased militarization of the areas and white populations in and around New Orleans; the results were rapid and long lasting. Within a week the militias, largely a decorative vestige attached to planters societies, began to meet weekly and to practice shooting, riding, and hanging.

The Federal government rapidly followed in the wake of these local initiatives and dispatched, at the request of the Speaker of the House, three gunboats to New Orleans, specifically for quelling future slave insurrections. Additionally the Mayor introduced new regulations that addressed the issue of slave rebellions, including a tax on planters whose chattels represented such a threat to the peace and order of the community. This same legislation also held slave owners financially responsible for the behavior of their slaves. Claibourne disagreed with this initiative and it was never implemented. On the other hand Claibourne pushed the Federal government to reimburse the planters for slaves who had been murdered in the rebellion, and in the same way that Wall Street was bailed out some two hundred years later, this initiative was implemented and many of the planters did seek compensation for the slaves killed. The payment was capped at $300 per male slave, and hence was not commensurate with the market value of the bondsmen, but it was better than nothing. The plantation owners thereafter became Americans, and so long as the government didn't touch their property or seek to meddle in the institution of slavery, the Creole elite had been effectively coopted, and would remain so until the first cannon fire over Fort Sumter.

Lost History

In the final chapter the author follows the politics of slavery in Louisiana and elsewhere, right up to the point of the Emancipation Proclamation. Thereafter he describes the eventual loss of this slave revolt to history, moving deftly through the various Marxist, collaborationist, and local histories and their various perspectives on this and all slave revolts. Finally he notes that the absence of this revolt from textbooks is a loss to those seeking to understand various currents in US history, including slavery, expansion, cultural hegemony, and also the long and cherished history of American refusal.

Finally, our Harvard-trained undergrad historian, in seeking to find a modern historical event that resonates with the same themes as the German Coast revolt, reaches back to Monroe, NC in the summer of 1957. The local swimming pool, forbidden to Monroe's black population, was the initial point of contention in this series of events. A number of black children, banned from the pool, had gone off into the woods and found alternate places to cool off from the searing Carolina sun. Unfortunately this resulted in a number of accidental drownings, and the local NAACP president, Robert F. Williams, decided it was time to fight back. On consecutive days he took a number of black children to the municipal pool, demanding entry. He and his charges were vilified, jostled, and finally denied entry.

The local Klan got involved and on a number of Sundays rode through the black neighborhood shooting out windows and generally being very violent.

Robert Williams, though, was made of some pretty stern stuff. He had fought in Korea, was a member of

the NRA, and was not about to let a bunch of crackers shoot up his neighborhood anymore. So he and a group of other black veterans built trenches and fortified positions throughout his neighborhood. On October 5, 1957, the Klan held a large rally in Monroe and then proceeded to get into their cars and drive to the black area in search of some excitement, and they got it. Williams and his men were settled into their various defensive structures and the minute one of the Klansmen fired a shot, they came under fire from numerous positions. The Klansmen backed out of the neighborhood and never returned.

The local power structure was stunned at how events had proceeded and the City Council met the very same week to ban Klan rallies in the city of Monroe. Williams was an astonishing personality and the FBI, state investigative agencies, and others moved in to scare and harass these black folks into submission. Williams was being interviewed on radio and television and saying thing like,

> *We got no justice under the present system. If we feel that injustice is done, we must right then and there on the spot be prepared to inflict punishment on these people [the Klan].*

Williams set off an international firestorm, Malcolm X among others was in full agreement, Martin Luther King Jr. was horrified and the two men engaged in sharp, acrimonious exchanges whenever they met. In Williams' words to King, after the reverend had refused to join a march in Alabama, "No sincere leader asks his followers to make sacrifices that he himself would not make. You are a phony."

Williams was hounded by the FBI into eventual exile

in Cuba and during the Bay of Pigs he sent a telegram to UN ambassador Adlai Stevenson, that read,

> *Now that the United States has proclaimed support for people willing to rebel against oppression, oppressed Negroes of the South urgently request tanks, artillery, bombs, money and the use of American airfields and white mercenaries to crush the racist tyrants who have betrayed the American Revolution and the Civil War. We also request prayers for this undertaking.*

No reply was forthcoming from Stevenson.

As the author indicates, Williams and King promoted vastly different strategies, though the goal for both men was equality. And, like Kook, Quamana, and Charles Deslondes, Williams was ready to take up arms against the US in order to achieve his goals. These men fought US government agents, and suffered either exile or execution for their actions.

The author points out that these lost histories of violent refusal, as opposed to non-violent non-cooperation, are central to an understanding of the US, and to understanding the views of those who stand outside history and society, and hence are in a unique place to undermine the entire system. This volume, then, may be something more as well; perhaps the language and understanding of violent refusal is beginning to make its way into the corridors of the institutions with the role of training the ruling elite. If this book had been written by a student at Berkeley, it would have been expected, but as the product of a Harvard undergrad maybe we are indeed seeing cracks all along the increasingly fragile neoliberal system.

Illegalism:

Why Pay for a Revolution on the Installment Plan... When You Can Steal One?

In truth, it isn't indispensable to feel oneself an anarchist to be seduced by the coming demolitions. All those who society flagellates in the very intimacy of their being instinctively wants vengeance. A thousand institutions of the old world are marked with a fatal sign. Those affiliated with the plot have no need to hope for a distant better future; They know a sure means to seize joy immediately: Destroy passionately!

Zo d'Axa

Destroy Passionately!

Well as through this world I've traveled,
I've seen lots of funny men,
Some will rob you with a six gun
and some with a fountain pen
But as through this world you ramble,
as through this world you roam,
you will never seen an outlaw
drive a family from their home.

Woody Guthrie
Pretty Boy Floyd

Illegalism—The open embrace of criminality as an expression of anarchism, particularly individualist anarchism.

The advent of the illegalist tendency in the last decade of the nineteenth and first two decades of the twentieth century, primarily in France, Switzerland, Belgium

and Italy, proved to be yet another contentious, seemingly indefensible dark stain on the soul of Anarchy for many of its working class adherents. Like the terrorists, the assassins, and the bandits—the illegalists presented to the world the tableau of the vessel of social morality tipped, emptied and smashed. For the illegalists crime was an accepted economic activity, and simultaneously the very heart and soul of social insurrection, the negation and the negation of the negation.

Passage into the illegalist milieu portended a commitment that encompassed the condemnation of all law, all morality, a rejection of both virtue and vice. It established a terrain of activity that by definition was beyond the purview of all social institutions and accepted relationships—the landscape of the illegalist was a place where the insurrection had already been fought and won.

The illegalists were probably the most individual of anarchists while simultaneously maintaining the strongest bonds of association and communication, bonds required by the social activity of crime as insurrection. The illegalist milieu also illuminates a singular aspect of utopia, specifically that when the anarchist society is realized it will not be as a result of some esoteric will-to-liberty, or a Freudian erotic demiurge, nor as the result and sum of a labored economic equation, rather utopia will arise as a function of necessity, as banal as breakfast and as certain as summer heat.

In the same manner that the illegalists turned to crime to survive and to speak, so society will turn to utopia to survive ... and to speak. Of course, illegalist actions and theory are the stuff from which controversy is manufactured, not even ordinary criminals will condone crime publicly, and the Left, which has always asserted a

monopoly on morality, was as outraged as the politicians and the press of the dominant society when anarchists started cracking safes and shooting bank tellers.

Anarchist history provides shining examples of theoretical hypocrisy; certainly the syndicalists, with their dreams of economic organization built atop massive industrial union structures were no great fans of the illegalists.

The anarcho-communists who had watched as their tendency bled adherents into the various communist parties on one side and the syndicalists on the other were in no position to respond at any level, though Jean Grave, among others would develop a ranting liberal critique of the whole scene.

A very similar controversy reared its head two decades ago when Murray Bookchin and his "social anarchist" minions started throwing much at "lifestyle anarchists" for being uninterested in organizing for the masses for either the social revolution, or even a late July Social Ecology picnic. Though Bookchin obviously felt this was a new controversy within anarchism, his ravings (and ours) had all the trappings of the Syndicalist versus illegalist tribal warfare conducted circa 1910.

Finally, the Occupations of 2011 and the arguments brought for and against violence in the General Assemblies, as reported in the non-MSM press, also seemed yet another rehash of the illegalist controversy that played out a full century ago in France.

Yet, illegalism strikes deeper into anarchy than an economic or political construct—including class struggle, surplus value, or post-modern analysis done in crayon.

Certainly, the illegalist tap roots penetrate further than most anarchists would like to admit, and they are

not only buried in the conceptual tangle that supports the anarchist challenge, they are also present and resonate throughout every historical manifestation of anarchy or anarchism.

Thus one day in a post-insurrectionary era a toddler holding fast to a chair for balance may query a parent—"are you an anarchist, too, Mama?"

For the simple reason that the child already knows that mom is an illegalist—it goes without saying.

Clément Duval from War to Crime to Devil's Island to New York

The very first illegalist, and the man who would provide the initial intellectul argument for anarchists as criminals was Clément Duval. He had served as a line soldier during the Franco-Prussian War and while unclear whether he participated in the Commune, he was wounded horribly by a Prussian mortar shell and subsequently contracted smallpox while recovering. He spent the next 10 years of his life recovering, including four years in hospital.

Upon release he was basically unemployable, being skilless save soldiering and with multiple physical challenges, and so set about becoming a thief. He also later jointed the legendary anarchist group the Panther of the Batignolles, one of the many contemporary Parisian affinity groups in that era who were notorious for their extreme ideas and also their street actions which seemed designed more to imperil police officers and violate laws than to protest any perceived slight to the anarchist community.

The Panther also doubled as a criminal conspiracy and their occasional forays into illegality would push

Duval even further into the milieu. Duval, however, was a pretty mediocre criminal, shortly after joining the Panther he was arrested for the theft of 80 francs and spent a year in prison. Then on October 25 of 1886 Duval broke into a socialites house, stole 15,000 francs and set the house on fire—either accidentally or on purpose, his "confession" is unclear on this point.

He was apprehended two weeks later trying to fence some of the goods from the burglary.

The myth of the illegalists begins with his arrest, for as the cop Rossignol was trying to apprehend Duval, Duval pulled a dagger from his coat and stabbed him repeatedly.

Though Rossignol would survive his wounds, the image of an apprehended criminal striking back at an officer of the law mid-arrest was an addition to the history of crime that only an illegalist could have made. His trial drew loud support from all segments of the anarchist milieu and ended in chaos as he was dragged from court screening, "Long Live Anarchy!"

He had also sent to the anarchist paper La Revolte an article which included the lines,

Theft exists only exists through the exploitation of man by man...when Society refuses you the right to exist, you must take it...the police-man arrested me in the name of the Law, I struck him in the name of Liberty.

Duval was sentenced to the "dry guillotine" of Devil's Island from which, after 20 unsuccessful attempts, he finally got it right and escaped in April of 1901 and lived out the rest of his life in New York City.

His memoirs were published in 1929, and have just recently been republished (*Outrage: An Anarchist Memoir of the Penal Colony*, translated by Michael Shreve, PM

Press, 2012).

Duval never renounced nor backtracked from his life as an anarchist and criminal.

The Workers of the Night

The second foray of anarchists into the criminal milieu is due to one man, Marius Jacob, who just didn't seem to be able to fit in.

Initially, a sailor's apprentice on a voyage to Sydney, Australia, he jumped ship at some point in time and among other employments tried piracy but found it too cruel to his tastes.

Upon returning to France he took up typography and militant anarchist activity that ended with him being caught with a parcel of explosives after a string of minor larcenies. Jacob knew when he was beat, and thereafter never sought legitimate employment, rather he gathered around him a group of anarchists similarly alienated from the world of work and formed what they termed the "Workers of the night."

He used the term "pacifistic illegalism" to describe this new twist on anarchist activities. Jacob and his band evolved a simple though powerful set of guidelines: one does not kill except to protect one's life and freedom from the police, one steals only from social parasites like bankers, bosses, judges, soldiers, the clergy, not from useful members of society like doctors, artists, or architects. Finally, a percentage of the proceeds were to be donated to anarchist causes, depending on the choice and tastes of the illegalist doing the stealing and the giving. Jacob and his gang proved to be cunning and successful burglars.

One of the many tricks they introduced was forcing their way into an apartment from the one above. To

facilitate this a small hole was drilled through the floor of the top apartment and into the ceiling of the lower dwelling. A closed umbrella was inserted through the hole and opened so that falling debris and noise would be lessened in the target apartment.

From 1900 to 1903 Jacob and his small crew of from two to four burglars perpetuated at least one hundred fifty burglaries throughout France, including a smash and grab at the Tours Cathedral, and pilfering an Admieral's mansion in Cherbourg.

Then in April of 1903 the whole venture went sour with the slaying of a police officer in Abbeville during an escape. Jacob and his confederates were eventually captured, and were tried two years later in Amiens. Anarchists flocked to the city to support him, and while his legal defense left much to be desired he avoided the guillotine, sentenced instead to life at hard labor in Cayenne.

After seventeen escape attempts he was finally pardoned and returned to France, though he was unhappy in Paris and moved to the Loire Valley where he continued on with his life.

He eventually remarried (his first wife had died while he was in the bagne, the Gallic Gulag) and took up a life of commercial travel. In spite of this his anarchist activities never abated. He traveled to Barcelona in 1936 to volunteer for the CNT/FAI militas, but was convinced that the battle would be lost by the communists and republicans and so returned to France.

During the Nazi Occupation he participated in Maquis sabotage squads (mostly composed of expat Spainards, like Sabate, with a score to settle with any fascist—Spanish or German), primarily as a safe house operator and provider of food and succor for the guerrillas.

Marius committed suicide by intentional morphine overdose on August 28, 1954.

His suicide was far from surrender, rather he wrote that it was a result of his calm acceptance of being unwilling to fight the rigors of old age. (My father committed suicide with a pistol in March of 2008 for very much the same reason, and I honor his will and courage in this action.)

Marius in the final years of his life developed a mixed attitude towards illegalism, based in part on the old magnetic attraction of proletarian workerist anarchism:

> *I don't think that illegalism can free the individual in present-day society. If he manages to free himself of a few constraints using this means, the unequal nature of the struggle will create others that are even worse and, in the end, will lead to the loss of his freedom, the little freedom he had, and sometimes his life.*
>
> *Basically, illegalism, considered as an act of revolt, is more a matter of temperament than of doctrine. This is why it cannot have an educational effect on the working masses as a whole. By this I mean a worthwhile educational effect.*

Strangely, this statement would have been accepted by Bonnot, Garnier, and the other illegalists as being accurate—they were not very interested in propaganda by the deed, rather they were convinced that the deed itself—the robbery, the assassination—was the insurrection. The point was not to educate the masses towards the social revolution, but to realize their insurrection here, now and for no one else but the individual, and possibly the union of egoists that she surrounds herself with—the herd, the collaborators—be damned.

Both Marius and Duval must be considered ulti-

mately as proto-illegalists, each saw their respective criminal enterprises in a propaganda-of-the-deed conceptual framework, and as *l'reprise individuelle* (basically individual expropriation).

The act was justified in a moral universe that turned as nearly as possible the dominant moral codes upside down, but nonetheless acknowledged and accepted society and its flaws as the strawman—the thing that conceptually must be destroyed and altered, manipulated in a negative fashion.

The illegalists, however, were less interested in social revolution than they were in living in a state of rebellion. Given the chance they would have saved damn little of the dominant society, and certainly wouldn't have used it as a negative paradigm from which to design an anarchist community—which is the single greatest conceptual flaw of the workerist anarchism.

In this sense these proto-illegalists seem more aligned to the mass-base anarchist tendencies than to the individualist milleu from which Bonnot and others would arise.

This is best exhibited by Marius's ploughing his ill gotten gains into any one of a number of anarchist papers and projects, and the fact that such donation was an expected part of the gang's ethics. Both men viewed their crimes as a means to an end, as a way to pay the rent and also as bringing the social revolution that much closer to fruition by supporting anarchist causes.

One is also reminded of Durruti, Ascaso, and Oliver who, during their "pistolero" period, were clearly closer to either Marius, Duval, or even Nobiling, than to say, a Kropotkin.

Yet in their case the assassination and robberies

were, among other things, a way to support the CNT, and later the FAI, and hence were only mildly tinged with individualist anarchist ideas.

The success of *La Revista Blanca*, and the popularity of its editors, Federica Montseny and her father Joan (Federico Urales), would leave a deeply individualist mark on all of Spanish anarchism, including the syndicalist CNT.

Given the repression that was present in Spain during the period when such actions took place, criminal or not, their "outrages" were politically consistent and while not illegalist are worth recalling with fondness.

Finally it should be noted that Marxists and the syndicalists who drew dark, bold lines between crime and the working class did so in spite of the very real proclivity of both groups to pass back and forth freely from one social role to the other.

Victor Kibalchich, of whom more later noted of Paris in the early 1900s,

> *One of the particular characteristics of working class Paris at that time was that it was in contact with the riff-raff, i.e. with the vast world of irregulars, decadents, wretched ones, with the equivocal world.*
>
> *There were few essential differences between the young worker or artisan of the old quarters of the center and the pimps in the alleys of the neighborhoods of the Halles. The rather quick-witted driver and mechanic, as a rule, stole whatever they could from the bosses, through class spirt and because they were 'free' of prejudices.*

Similarly, the majority of loss to theft in businesses today is due less to customers than to employees conscious enough to fill their backpacks with store inventory and office supplies after a hard day's wage slavery.

Toccata and Fugue in Dynamite, Dagger, and Pistol

Concurrent with the fusion of anarchism and crime were the waves of assassinations and bombings throughout Europe perpetrated by anarchists. The opening salvo of the assassination campaigns began in the anarchist watershed year of 1878. Emil Max Hodel attempted to end the life of the Kaiser, Wilhelm I, on May 11, 1878 with a pistol. When the first shot strayed he walked across the street to try again, but was apprehended in the process.

Less than a month later the anarchist Dr. Karl Nobling had another go at Wilhelm I, again with a pistol and being a better shot he wounded the aging monarch but did not kill him. Nobling then shot himself in the head, succumbing to his wounds a few weeks later.

Hodel was tried and subsequently beheaded on August 16, 1878.

On November 17, 1878, the anarchist Giovanni Passannante attacked the king of Italy, Umberto I, who was on tour of the kingdom and accompanied by Queen Margherita and Prime Minister Benedetto Cairoli.

Wielding a dagger Passannante tried to stab the monarch who warded off the lunge with a sabre blow. The king lived, but Cairoli, a former Garibaldian officer and total sellout, was severely wounded and retired, briefly, from public life.

Passannante was tried and condemned to death, even though that punishment was explicitly reserved for successful regicides. Umberto commuted his sentence to life imprisonment in a cell only 1.4 meters high, without sanitation and wearing thirty pounds of chains. Passanante would later die in an insane asylum from his treatment during his years in hell.

The Russian anarchist populist People's Will (Norodnya Volya) finally got it right (after several wild attempts) on 13 March, 1881 by tossing a bomb into Czar Aleksandr II's coach. The bomb fired but didn't harm the autocrat. However, as he stood in the street observing the carnage—and waiting for transport back to the Winter Palace, another member of the People's Will, also armed with a bomb, thew it at Aleksandr's feet, which exploded—killing him instantly.

The repression by the Russian state was savage and in response the People's Will set about plotting to kill the replacement czar, Nicholas. Their plans were uncovered leading to the arrest and hanging of Alecksandr Ulianov, Lenin's older brother; which launched his younger sibling on the road to the Marxists/statist counterrevolution. So in terms of the long term political scorecard an anarchist should probably chalk that assassination up to a draw—sure they got Aleksandr, but ultimately the world got the Bolsheviks. Mixed bag.

The political violence revives, after a ten-year lull, in 1891 in France when during a May Day celebration at Fourmies the police fired into a crowd of workers with a new device, the Lebel machine gun: by official count fourteen dead, forty wounded.

On the same day a small anarchist demonstration of laborers in Clichy degenerated into a running gun battle after the police attempted to break up the meeting. Three of the anarchist fighters from Clichy were rewarded by the French justice system with unusually harsh prison sentences for the time (three and five years).

Enter Ravachol, an impoverished, but highly-motivated, anarchist who unreleased a singular and determined bombing campaign.

First he bombed the home of the presiding judge of the Clichy anarchists (March 1, 1892), then the Lobau police barracks, where Communard prisoners had been taken to be executed (March 15, 1892).

Ravachol was turned in after speaking a bit too openly about his exploits to a waiter while having dinner. He was arrested and executed in July of 1892. Of note is the fact that on the day before the start of his trial a bomb exploded in the restaurant where Ravachol had spilled the beans to the waiter; evidently an attempt at vengeance.

Next stop Spain—November 7, 1893, with the tossing of two Orsini bombs by the anarchist Santiago Salvador into the orchestra pit of the Liceu Theater in Barcelona meant to avenge the garroting of anarchists in Jerez. The explosions killed twenty and injured an unknown number of others.

Not to be outdone by a Spanish comrade, and with Ravachol's guillotine to avenge—on December 9, 1893 August Vaillant walking into the Chamber of Deputies in Paris and tossed a bomb packed with nails at the assorted legislators (no fatalities, one injury). He gave himself up and was guillotined on February 3, 1894.

Then on February 12, 1894 Emile Henry upped the ante and tossed a bomb into the Cafe Terminus at the Fare St. Lazare train station to avenge the death of Vaillant. He was apprehended, tried, and guillotined on the 21st of May in the same year. Henry distinguishes himself by giving a brilliant account of his political movement towards anarchism and his justification for his bombing in court.

The peroration is still reprinted to this day and is worth the time spent to read it.

Finally to top it all off Sante Geronimo Casrio, an Italian anarchist, to avenge the death of Henry Vaillant, Ravachol and anybody else he could think of, stabbed and killed the French President Sadi Carnot on 24 June 1894. He was tried and guillotined in Lyons on 15 August of the same year.

The life of bombings and assassinations goes on almost without interruption until September 1932, when several galleanisti, using a large dynamite device, effectively leveled the home of Justice Webster Thayer, who presided over the trial of Sacco and Vanzetti—then resumes again in the sixties and continues on into the present...

Disharmonic Convergence

In terms of political activity and propaganda things were also afoot in the form of Albert Joseph, or Albert Libertad, or just Libertad.

Born in 1875 in Bordeax and abandoned at birth he became a ward of the state, and faced the usual miserabilist existence then doled out by the Third Republic to its unfortunates. Having lost the use of a leg as a result of childhood illness, probably polio, Libertad walked the rest of his life with the assistance of canes or crutches—which also doubled as clubs in a fight.

At the age of 21 Libertad moved to Paris and dove into writing, publishing, organizing, partying, lovemaking, just about every available opportunity for life and joy was not lost on the man. He worked and contributed to numerous journals including *Le Libertaire*, *L'En-Dehors*, and finally on 13 April 1905 there appeared the influential individualist journal that he founded, *L'Anarchie*, a four page broadsheet.

The journal was widely read, and being sufficiently easy to publish occasionally had incredible large print runs; as an example one issue specific to the July 14th holiday was issued in a print run of 1,000,000. (By comparison, most contemporary North American anarchist publications run far fewer than 5,000 copies—*Modern Slavery* has an average print run of 3k.)

This issue included a manifesto appropriately entitled "The Bastille of Authority." During Libertad's life he met and worked with an astonishing array of writers, artists, and oddly, politicians.

As an example, he worked as a correcter on Astride Briand's journal *La Lanterne*, which is weird because Briand was not only a Socialist politician but served a total of eleven terms as Prime Minister of France, and later offered one of the first proposals for an economic union of European nation-states some ninety years before the EU was realized.

Libertad also worked with various anarchist agitators from Zo d'Axa (quoted above), the founder of the pre-eminent individualist anarchist journal *L'En-Dehors* (*The Outside*), reborn in 2002 and currently a francophone website (http://endehors.net); Sebastien Faure; Victor Kibalchich; George Mathias; Paraf-Javal, and Émile Armand.

Those last two anarchists, along with Libertad, founded and organized the *Causeries Populaire*, well-attended individualist anarchist public discussion groups that eventually proliferated throughout Paris.

Libertad wrote in short clipped stacccato pronouncements strung together by a common theme, very like prose poetry.

Finally, Libertad's version of free love and his natu-

ral combativeness backfired when in February of 1908 during an internecine individualist brawl he was kicked in the stomach by one of the two Mahe sisters, both of whom had been at one time or another his lovers. He died a week later in the hospital.

Victor Kibalchich picked up the editorship of *L'Anarchie*, and if anything cranked the articles into a virtual storm of individualist and illegalist rhetoric.

L'Anarchie moved rapidly into deep individualist waters propelled not only by the experimentation of the editorial staff with free love, vegetarianism and water-only diets, but by the discovery of the anarchist community in France of Max Stirner, the prophet of the sovereign self.

His work, *L'Unique et sa Properiete*, was read, quoted, argued, lauded, and reviled throughout the first decade of the 20th century in France, and indeed in most of Europe and the US by anarchists of all stripe.

Stirner's most basic argument is grounded in an effective reduction of all conceptual political categories to ash, he derides all external loci of power, coercion and control and places the individual his or her needs and desires, including the desire for real community, at the center of his universe.

When first published in German, Marx, among others immediately recognized the rammifications of the work and in response he wrote a typically lengthy and dull polemic in *The German Ideology* in a failed attempt to squash the individualist challenge.

Later editions of Marx's book edited out the most of the anti-Stirner material (almost three hundred pages), primarily as a result of the shunting of *The Unique and Its Property* into a sideyard of theory for several decades.

With the re-discovery of Stirner in the 1890s, and the printing of the first French translation of his work in 1900, the individualists had found a sound theoretical underpinning for a number of different projects.

As an example of Stirner's thought that directly addresses the issue of crime, guilt and liberation,

> *Only when I expect neither from individuals nor from a collectivity what I can give myself, only then do I scrape the bonds of – love; the rabble stops being rabble only when it seizes....Only that seizing is sin, crime, only this rule creates a rabble...If people reach the point where they lose respect for property, then everyone will have property, as all slaves become free people as soon as they longer respect the master as master.*

The praise of crime was not just sounded in the individualist milieu and journals, rather it was found in almost all of the anarchist press of the time with varying degrees or rabidity.

One of the better examples was Emile Pouget's journal Pere Peinard, the most widely read working class anarchist periodical, described vividly by a contemporary as,

> *[having] no display of philosophy [which is not to say that it had none], it played upon the appetites, prejudices, and rancorous of the proletariat. Without reserve or disguise, it incited theft, counterfeiting, the repudiation of taxes and rents, killing and arson. It counseled the immediate assassination of deputies, senators, judges, priests and army officers.*
>
> *It urged... farm laborers and vineyard workers to take possession of the farm and vineyards, and to turn the landlords and vineyard owners into fertilizing phosphates ... it recounted the exploited of olden-time brig-*

ands and outlaws and exhorted contemporaries to follow their example.

So the anarchist press hasn't really changed that much, the above content being stock in trade for the best libertarian periodicals now.

By 1910 all this theorizing, bombing, thieving individualist philosophy and intransigence would produce a group of young men and women determined to settle the score with bourgeois society in the form of the Bonnot Gang.

Beginnings: The Gang Forms

Of significance is the fact that Belgium plays a role in the formation of the gang; the small, primarily francophone monarchy served as a destination for young men seeking to avoid service in the French army, political exiles, and on the lam criminals. Several gang members would first encounter each other in Brussels and there they found sufficient agreement in ideals and goals to begin the process of forming themselves into a working illegalist combine.

Our first suspect is Raymond Callemin (La Science) who was born in Brussels and the earliest childhood friend of Victor Kibalchich, scion of an impoverished Russian refugee family. The two young men worked their way through a course of reading and drifting slowly towards anarchism, which among other results caused Raymond's father, an alcoholic and disillusioned socialist, to disown him for keeping bad company.

Kibalchich would eventually land a job on the French side of the border and while there made contact with Causeries Popularies speakers and promoters, and it was here that he met and became enamored of Henriette Mai-

trejean (Rirette). Rirette had been married to an anarchist worker living in Paris at 17 but by the age of twenty-two with two small children and finding her husband rather boring had drifted through various anarchist millieux until finally she settled into individualist circles.

One of the main anarchist papers in Brussels, Le Revolte, served as a center for anarchist and later individualist activities and propaganda. It was here that Edouard Carouy, the paper's editor encountered a young Parisian draft dodger, thief, and anarchist named Octave Garnier, one of the two primary founders, with Bonnot of course, of the Bonnot Gang.

Garnier had been born in Fontainbelau, near Paris, on Christmas in 1989. Garnier's life of crime begins early and he was initially imprisoned at the age of 17 for conducting a series of smash and grabs. Exiting prison he found that without the requisite formal certification indicating responsibility, sobriety, and distaste for rebellion, most employers would have nothing to do with him. So taking a practical stance he had the appropriate forms forged and entered into the world of work, which he found to be far nastier than unemployment, theft, or prison.

He drifted from job to job, tried his hand at being a mechanic, but was repeatedly rejected by employers.

During this period of drifting employment he participated in a number of strikes—which disillusioned him to the viability of a working class revolution. He found his workmates more interested in drink than in changing their situation, and this proclivity only made them more brutish, dull and easily led. He observed that union leaders, and especially the syndicalists, were about the same as the capitalists as they both sought to manipulate workers to serve their own ends.

Finally he concluded in his biography, penned shortly before his death and found on his body,

> *So I became an anarchist. I was about eighteen and no longer wanted to go back to work, so once again I began la reprise individuelle.*

By May 1910 he was nearing the age of being called up into the armed forces and so began to drift towards the refuge of Belgium. Of note here is that the law of 1905 instituting compulsory military service had created an entire underclass of the militarily-challenged, by one 1910 estimate a full 90,000 Frenchmen were being sough for draft evasion or outright desertion.

While in Belgium Garnier finally found himself in the company of at least some semi-professional criminals, including Carouy the editor of Le Revolte, who augmented his income as a part-time pipe fitter with an occasional burglary; counterfeiting was also on the menu, and here he was instructed by Louis Maitrejean, Rirette's erstwhile husband.

Meanwhile Victor, having arrived in Paris, began writing for *L'Anarchie*, and finally got the chance to spend more with time Rirette, who, at their first encounter, found him uninteresting and "a poser." It was in the Luxembourg Gardens that Victor introduced Rirette to a shy young anarchist named Rene Valet.

Valet was born into a middle class home, became interested in anarchism at a young age and had fled Belgium to to avoid military service. It was there that he met Victor and Garnier.

His stay in Belgium was short though and upon return to Paris he collaborated on the journal *Le Libertaire*, attended anarchist meetings, and spent a lot of free time with Victor. It was during this period that Rirette intro-

duced Victor to Andre Soudy, a pale thin young man and the most easily identifiable symbol of the Bonnot Gang as the photographic image of "the man with the rifle" had passed into the anarchist collective consciousness, including some rather impressive tattoos based on the photo.

Victor described Soudy as, the perfect example of the crushed childhood of the back -alleys. He grew up on the street: TB at thirteen, VD at eighteen...

> *In the close anarchist circles in which Soudy moved he was known by the nickname 'Pas de chance' (not a chance – a very prescient moniker indeed). It also reflected the fact that he felt his life was to be short given 'the price of medicine.'*

Then in the midst of all the fermentation in Paris an event in Tottenham, a northern suburb of London, broke like a storm on the international anarchist community.

In December of 1910, several members of a Latvian revolutionary cell, while engaged in breaking into a jewelers store, were interrupted by the police. The comrades shot their way out, killing three policemen and wounding two, in the process also killing the leader of the kommando.

Eventually two comrades were traced back to Tottenham and there fought one of the anarchist equivalents of Thermopylae—there would be others. The two men, armed only with pistols, held off seven hundred soldiers and dozens of cops. The Home Office was eventually forced to bring in artillery, and a young Winston Churchill, to the battle. The fires started by the cannonade ended the confrontation with the anarchists expiring in the flaming building—they never surrendered.

The news traveled quickly around Europe and the

Americas drawing praise from most anarchist groups and derision from the powers that be.

A young and impressionable Alfred Hitchcock read all he could about the Seige of Sidney Street and eventually would put his artistic spin on it in the final scene of the 1934 version of *The Man Who Knew Too Much.*

Kibalchich wrote an article in *L'Anarchie* entitled simply "Two Men" and in it he lays down one of the many conceptual visions that would subsequently animate the Bonnot Gang,

In the ordinary sense of the word we cannot and will not be honest. By definition, the anarchist lives by expediency; work for him, is a deplorable expedient, like stealing... He takes no account of any conventions which safeguard property; for him, force alone counts. Thus we have neither to approve nor disapprove of illegal actions.

We say: they are logical.

The anarchist is always illegal – theoretically. The sole word 'anarchist' means rebellion in every sense.

Several other minor actors join the group over the course of the next several months, mostly very young men well heeled in individualist anarchism and burning for some way, any way, to strike back at bourgeois society. This amorphous group moves back and forth across Paris, flats were rented, small communes came into being and were abandoned, arguments materialized and were forgotten.

The single greatest surprise of these months is that somehow the illegalists found themselves in complete control of *L'Anarchie*, with Kibalchich and Rirette taking over editorial duties.

The Final Puzzle Piece—Bonnot

Much has been made of the character of Jules Bonnot, a charlatan, a dandy, a sociopath, a criminal masquerading as an anarchist, or vice versa.

It is known that unlike the other members of the gang he did serve in the military and made the most of the experience.

He learned to drive and fix motor cars and became a crack shot with both pistol and rifle—two skills that would serve him well when he decided on a career in crime.

Finally he was older than most of the other gang members by a decade, which provided him with determination and, strangely, a measured recklessness that rapidly infected (and affected) his younger comrades.

Mostly centered in Lyon after military service, he did occasional mechanic work and waited for the right burglary to come along—and when it did he hit it big. Bonnot had been traveling around to the homes of various lawyers posing as a businessman asking for legal services and inquiring about the climate for commerce in various regions of France.

In July 1910 he found his target, the home of a wealthy lawyer from Vienne; Bonnot and an accomplice drove to the house during a downpour to cover any sounds of the burglary. They cut through some shutters, broke a pane of glass, and Bonnot, using oxyacetylene torch burned a hole 30 cm wide into the safe from which 36,000 unfried francs were removed.

By the winter of 1911 Bonnot was finding Lyons far too warm for comfort, the heat included a visit to a garage he had been working at by the police where, among other swag, two recently stolen Terrot automobiles from

the nearby Weber factory were identified. Bonnot had luckily beenout and after learning of the visit headed to Paris directly, only to return a few weeks later to see the love of his life, Judith, one last time. Judith's husband worked as a grounds keeper in a cemetery and the two lovers said their final goodbyes among the quiet snow-blanketed tombs.

They would never see each other again.

So Bonnot and a companion, the hapless Platano, set off for Paris in a stolen La Bruite automobile on 26 November 1911. The journey was to be marred by misfortune, first of all, in spite of the freezing weather, the La Buire began to overheat causing the two companions to spend the night in a small hotel at Joigny.

The next day they set off again, only this time one of the cars tires punctured and as Bonnot set about fixing the flat, Platano began to inspect his newly acquired Browning 9mm pistol. According to Bonnot as he took the weapon from Platano to show him its mechanism, it discharged and shot Platano behind the ear, wounding him fatally.

Bonnot, not wanting to leave his comrade mortally wounded, shot him again in the head and then tossed the body in the bushes after emptying the dead man's pockets. Bonnot then sped off towards Paris.

The La Buire, like Platano, finally died and Bonnot was forced to take a train during the final leg of the journey into the Gare de Lyon. News of the death traveled rapidly to Lyons, and Bonnot was immediately identified as the most likely suspect.

Police scoured his former residences where they culled anarchist literature, burglar's tools, and the 25,000 francs that Bonnot had meant to be a nest egg for

his life with Judith.

Finally, Judith and her spouse were taken into custody and a warrant was issued for Bonnot's arrest. Fortune was on Bonnot's side however, as the Paris papers ignored the story, so while being hunted in Lyon he was relatively free to restart his criminal enterprises in the capital.

Upon arrival in Paris Bonnot looked up David Belonie, an anarchist whose name he had been given by contacts in Lyon; he explained the death of Platano to Belonie and it was suggested that a meeting of the illegalists be held to review the situation leading to the accident and to provide Bonnot the opportunity to clear himself of the homicide fully with the comrades.

A meeting was arranged in a top garret in Montmarte. Garnier, La Science, Carouy, Valet, and a few others settled in to hear Bonnot's side of the story. Bonnot aquitted himself well—angrily explaining the accident and denying that he'd kill Platano, that the shooting was a freak accident, and that the final coup de grace was to save the wounded man from any further pain, not to silence a homicide victim.

Sometime during the "trial" Garnier, and possibly others, realizes that this Bonnot was the man they had been waiting for—a mechanic, a sharpshooter, a tried and tested criminal with a certain degree of sang-froid, including ten years of experience in the demi-monde.

The Gang Bangs: A Fistful of Bullets

Within weeks Garnier, Bonnot and La Science began working together on their "big job".

A quick tangential note about the favored anarchist weapon of the time, the Browning 9mm semi-automatic

pistol. Thought not as accurate as other 9mm weapons like the Mauser, it was light, easily concealed, and ammunition was readily available; further with a seven round clip and capable of firing off five clips per minute it was vastly superior to most pistols wielded by the forces of law and order, especially the clunky cavalry surplus revolvers carried by the Paris police.

Finally, the Browning 9mm was the weapon wielded by Gavrilo Princip to assassinate Archduke Ferdinand in Sarajevo precipitating the First World War, and to bring the discussion full circle the Browning was manufactured in Belgium, very much like the Bonnot Gang.

The illegalists had visited various areas outside Paris to find an auto with which to perpetuate their crime and finally settled on a 1910 Delaunay-Belleville limousine belonging to a bourgeois in the suburb of Boulogne-sur-Seine.

The Delaunay-Belleville was considered one of the best cars then available, with a six-cylinder thirty horsepower engine and a distinctive circular radiator—Bonnot clearly had a hand in the decision, he rarely settled for second best.

The name also had anarchist connotations, Delaunay being the anarchist assassin of the second-in-command of the Surete in 1909 and Belleville being the Paris suburb where the Commune had begun, and where during the final bloody week of street fighting most of the Communards had been slaughtered by the troops of the triumphant Third Republic.

Bonnot, Garnier, and La Science stole the automobile on the night of 13 December without a hitch.

The next decision, however, was the key, who or what would they rob? And when?

They had weapons, a series of safe houses sprinkled throughout the outer boroughs of Paris and an impressively fast car.

On the evening of December 20th the four illegalists, Bonnot, Garnier, La Science, and one other usually thought to be either Rene Valet or Jon De Boe, picked up an acetylene torch and like Bonnot's previous burglary planned to enter the home of a bourgeois and relieve the capitalist of the contents of his safe. The weather, however, remained dry and clear, and Bonnot insisted that they have rain to cover at least some of the noise made during the breaking and entering.

At about half past three they gave up on the burglary plan and decided instead to go for a more bold, innovative job that had been planned by Garnier and Bonnot a few days before—a daylight robbery on the bank messenger for the Societie Generale, the largest Parisian bank and rivaled nationally only by the Credit Lyonnais.

The robbery would take place just as a bank messenger was to deposit funds into a branch of the Societie Generale in the Rue Ordener, just west of the Butte de Montmarte, which would allow the gang to either flee outside of Paris rapidly or to use the neighborhoods of Belleville or Montmarte as a screen.

The men must have felt an air of destiny in the whole endeavor, Bonnot was wanted for murder and if caught would surely face the guillotine, Garnier and Carouy were wanted for an attempted murder in Charleroi, forgery, and had been under surveillance for several months, and Raymond La Science, the only non-fugitive, with his disgust for bourgeois society clearly had little to lose either.

They ran through the plan a few times and around

eight o'clock found themselves parked on the Rue Ordener. "We were fearfully armed," recalled Garnier, "I had no less than six revolvers on me, my companions each had three, and we had about four hundred rounds in our pockets; we were quite determined to defend ourselves to the death."

A little after eight Octave spotted the guard walking out of the bank and towards the corner where the messenger would arrive. The guard stood on the corner and waited in the drizzle.

At last one of the local street cars ground to a halt and a handful of bowler-hatted men stepped off, though only one was greeted with a handshake from the guard. The bank messenger carried a satchel and briefcase.

As both men began to walk towards the bank, branch Garnier pulled his hat down low and said, "Let's go," as he stepped out of the car. He fixed his gaze on the messenger and marched straight towards him, with La Science a few paces behind.

Twenty yards from the bank, and six from the cash laden messenger Octave and Raymond pulled out their pistols and thrust them in to the bodyguard's and messenger's faces. The guard made a sprint for the bank doors as Garnier pushed the messenger down to the ground and grabbed his satchel.

Raymond grabbed the briefcase but the messenger reused to let go of it and was dragged a few yards up the street towards the waiting Delaunay.

Octave shot the messenger twice in the chest and ran to the car that Bonnot had just brought alongside the action. Octave jumped in the front seat, and Raymond, after dropping the briefcase in the gutter and retrieving it, hopped into the back seat.

Garnier held his pistol out the window and fired a few shots above the heads of any would be pursuers, and any traffic that impeded the escape. Five minutes later they flew past the Port de Clichy customs barrier and headed northwest towards St. Denis. Sometimes around 11 o'clock they halted the car and divided up the loot.

The small satchel revealed just 5,500 fr and the briefcase some 130,000 fr in bonds and checks. What was unknown to the men was that the messenger carried a small wallet inside his coat where the remaining 20,000 fr in cash was stashed.

Bonnot was irritated, he was much more comfortable with burglary and now that he had tried a daylight robbery it hadn't even paid very well.

They stopped for bread and chocolate and the proceeded to Rouen. They had decided to dump the auto over a cliff near Le Havre but ran out of gas too soon, so they pushed the car onto the breach where it stuck deep in the mud. They stripped the license plates—one of which was thrown into the sea and the other into a large garden behind a seaside casino. The men then took a late boat train back into Paris, arriving about 1 am.

Upon alighting in the Gare St-Lazare train station Raymond bought a copy of the right-wing *La Patrie* whose headlines included, "The Audacity of Parisian Brigands—A Bank Messenger Attacked in Rue Ordener," and "Bold Attack in Daylight." *La Presse* reported the robbery as being "without precedent in the history of crime," and called them, "les bandtis auto"—the auto bandits.

The Presse also blasted the police for allowing such a thing to happen, especially when it was discovered that of the 84 cops assigned to the area where the robbery oc-

curred only 18 were on duty at any given time.

The Times of London editorialized that, "at the moment when theives and other pests of society are daily resorting to more daring methods, the police are being more diverted from their primary duties in order to mount guard over strike-breakers and others who ... in normal circumstances ought not require special protection."

In this sense the class struggle, far from being the means to the social revolution, was proving to be an effective diversion for the ends of the illegalist insurrection.

The issue of the bonds and checks immediately played on the minds of the illegalists so Bonnot, with an interpreter, went to Amsterdam to see if they could recoup some of the money lost in the robbery by selling, trading or finding some way to turn the effectively worthless paper instruments into francs.

Of course the bonds' and checks' individual numbers were known across Europe within hours of the robbery and he was advised to wait until the heat had dissipated, or try cashing them in South America or Asia, where the likelihood of their origins may not, as yet, have been made known.

On the afternoon of December 24th La Science and Octave decided to visit Kibalchich and Rirette at home.

They knocked lightly at the door and a wide-eyed, incredulous Rirette let them in, hardly believing them still alive. They sat quietly and discussed the robbery with Victor, while Rirette occasionally shushed them for fear of waking the children.

As hours drew long the church bells rang in the new day, Christmas Day 1912, Garnier suddenly realized it was his birthday; he was 22.

The two illegalists took their leave of Victor and Ri-

rette and went their own ways to spend the Christmas holiday.

Victor, however, seeing Raymond and Garnier at close quarters, had realized that the time had come for *L'Anarchie* to rise to the occasion and to pour some gasoline on the illegalists' fire, and to stand at least in journalistic solidarity with the actions of the illegalists.

Kiabalchich faced the dual issue of his friendship with La Science, and his acquaintance with Garnier, (Bonnot being unknown to him), and for the fact that much of his writings were clearly an incitement to just exactly the type of action that had occurred on the Rue Ordener.

Something had to be written, and write it he did—in the first edition of *L'Anarchie* for the New Year appearing on Thursday 4 January 1912, bylined Le Retif and titled "The Bandit,"

To shoot, in full daylight, a miserable bank clerk proved that some men at least have understood the virtues of audacity.

> *I am not afraid to own up to it; I am with the bandits. I find their role a fine one; I see Men in then. Besides them I see only fools and nonentities.*
>
> *Whatever may result, I like those who struggle.*
>
> *Perhaps it will make you die younger, or force you to experience the manhunt and the penal colony; perhaps you will end up beneath the foul kiss of the guillotine.*
>
> *That may be! I like those who accept the risk of a great struggle...*
>
> *Besides one's destiny whether as victor or vanquished isn't it preferable to sullen resignation and the slow interminable agony of the proletarian who will die in re-*

tirement, a fool who has gained nothing out of life?
The bandit, he gambles. He has therefore chances of winning. And that is enough.
The bandits show strength.
The bandits show audacity.
The bandits show their firm desire to live.

Kibalchich was not done.

He knew that his friends were still at large and that now was the time to build some level of understanding and even support for the auto bandits among the various anarchist communities.

In notes for two causeries held during the weekend of January 27 and 28 he further developed his ideas.

He argued that society was the enemy of all individuality through its laws of social conservation and conformity, which deformed individuals into stunted, though "socialized" beings who could do little more than conform to a pre-defined role. He was under no illusions about social progress, and fatalistically suggested that things had been, were, and would continue to be pretty much the same.

As he indicated in a reply to a letter criticizing his article on the bandits, he considered their actions being "logical, inevitable, even necessary."

Kibalchich would write one more article for *L'Anarchie* defending the bandits entitled, "Anarchists and Criminals," in which he emphasized,

> *Outlaws, marginals, bandits – they alone dare, like us, to proclaim their will to live at any price. Certainly they live far from us, far from our dreams and our desires...*

But he had as much sympathy for them as he had for, "honest folks who've either made it or missed the boat."

Whatever that last line meant in modifying the general intransigence of the rest of the article, he was, at least, clear about the importance of the bandits, and their crimes as they apply to theory.

The police, however, were under no illusions as to how close, both physically and ideologically, *L'Anarchie* and the auto bandits were to each other.

On January 31 the offices of *L'Anarchie* were raided and searched, though nothing of note was found in that incursion. Of interest is the attitude of Jouin, the Inspector in charge of the anarchist section for the Surete, who spoke to Kiblchich wistfully of the ideas of Jean Grave, and how the illegalists were harming the "good name" of Anarchy.

Which is an old trick and has been used as recently as the arrest of Stuart Christie for his alleged involvement in the Angry Brigade Bombings of the early seventies when during his questioning the interrogating officer came on as an anarchist sympathizer more concerned with saving the good name of anarchy, than being a bloodhound sniffing about for sufficient evidence to send the arrestees to prison for several decades.

Yet another lesson for us all—beware the empathetic, politically engaged cops who "respects" your ideals—his real motive is to suck your blood, steal your time, and sink your soul—not save the good name of Anarchy.

The police returned later the next week and searched *L'Anarchie*'s offices once again, this time they unearthed two of the ubiquitous 9mm Brownings, which led to both Victor and Rirette's arrest for the possession of stolen goods (the pistols) which they identified as swag from the burglary of a gunsmith's shop that had occurred on Christmas Eve 1911.

Rirette was eventually turned loose, but Victor waited in jail for something to occur that would either lead to freedom or to his being charged as a fence for stolen property; either way his oaths of silence and non-cooperation with police interrogators ran deep and he remained silent—willing to sit out his detention.

The illegalists for their part were pretty certain the Surete was only a few steps behind them so they went to ground, changing their hair color and shaving off their distinctive moustaches; further Bonnot suggested that they begin to dress like the bourgeois enemy to allay suspicion—so he handed out collars, cuffs and new shirts to further their disguises.

Despite the notoriety attached to the Rue Ordener robbery, not one of the gang members thought for a minute of leaving France, let alone Paris.

La Science and Octave also maintained contact with Rirette, meeting her in restaurants and cafes to get the latest news and to hear how Victor was holding up in the belly of the beast.

The gang also kept scouting out new locations for the robberies and burglaries, particularly in the south, eventually happening upon Ellie Monier (aka Simentoff) yet another draft dodger who had flung himself as far as Switzerland to escape French military service.

In 1910 he had written a brief piece for *L'Anarchie* detailing an anti-syndicalist action for comrades in Arles. He readily joined the insurgent army of crime when the time came for his assistance.

On February 15, 1912 a superb Peugeot limousine was stolen in Beziers by persons unknown and driven northwards towards Paris.

By 9 am the following morning, however, the limo

had flattened and the five well-dressed occupants of the auto managed to get a lift from a local garage owner as far as Beaune. After lunch the men caught a train to Paris, arriving in at 6:15 pm. No one would ever be charged with the theft but the Surete detectives suspected it was yet another exploit of Bonnot and the gang.

Four days later the Parisian press announced that the hunt for Garnier had reached as far afield as Chemnitz and Berlin, though the gang's next "outrage" showed just how close the illegalists had stayed to their old stomping grounds.

In a spasm of spontaneity the gang had decided to travel south to rob the Lavernede mine near Alais and then the Comptoir National d'Escompte (a bank) near Nimes.

Once again they chose a Delaunay-Belleville for a getaway car, this one well fitted out by a bourgeois who was planning to follow the Tour de-France as it wound its way through the French countryside.

The car though, almost from the very beginning, developed mechanical problems and after four hours wasted getting it repaired the disgruntled illegalists headed back to Paris. A real lemon.

Their drive though Paris was epic by the standards of the day, Bonnot behind the wheel kept the limo above 80 miles an hour through much of the city knocking over a few stalls near the Palais Royale and barely missing an autobus backing out of a berth at the Gare St-Lazare by hopping the car up onto the sidewalk nearly crushing two pedestrians as the engine coughed and sputtered into silence.

A traffic policeman who had been watched as the limo careened wildly to avoid disaster hurried over to

demand the driver's papers. Bonnot ignored the cop and finally got the engine roaring again.

Garnier who had stepped out of the Delaunay for a moment, probably to slow the onset of an oncoming panic-induced heart attack, hopped into the back seat as the cop jumped on the running board and attempted to grab the wheel.

Garnier thinking quickly, fired three bullets point blank into the cops chest killing him as his body crumpled off the side of the car and collapsed into the road. Bonnot pushed the Delaunay back up to speed.

Two "honest" citizens attempted to give chase in their own automobiles but were mistaken by the gathering crowd as the auto bandits and were surrounded, and nearly seized and lynched.

Despite the best efforts of the mob to exact vigilante justice, the car of the would-be heroes pulled away from the growing pocket of bystanders and sped off only to run over a hapless young woman crossing the street. Their pursuit finally abandoned, the luckless posse of two were questioned severely by police, and subsequently released.

Bonnot and the others continued their search for a target and after 24 hours finally found a house worth burglarizing. They made quick work of the safe but raised enough noise to wake the inhabitants of the house.

The owner of the mansion, yet another lawyer, thinking quickly fired six shots at the burglars, which sent the illegalists running for cover and ended the attempt of the gang for an honest, non-violent burglary.

Octave, in a fit of pique, found sufficient flammables to set the Delaunay alight and the gang returned to Paris without a penny to show for 48 hours of wild illegality,

including very nearly vehicular manslaughter.

As a result the gang decided to lay low for a few months and during this time the Surete went into overdrive arresting anyone even remotely associated with *L'Anarchie*, eventually catching two fish worth having—Belonie and Rodriguez, the two fences who had been given the responsibility of selling the bonds and checks taken during the Ordener robbery. After selling the financial instruments and realizing a small sum for the gang both men were taken into custody and Rodriguez started doing all in his power to avoid the guillotine, both wet and dry.

The illegalists had grown somewhat depressed in the meantime; the sale of the bonds had yielded almost nothing, their last attempt at crime had been fun but a fiasco, the anarchist community had almost unanimously condemned them, and just as a final painful reminder of just how isolated they truly were, *L'Anarchie* had published a piece bylined "LA"that had thrown some real dirt at the gang.

The author had called them, "feeble, narrow minded simpletons," whose theories were a load of crap; LA further noted that while their lives would be short, it was necessary for all anarchists to denounce their deeds and move as rapidly as possible in the opposite direction.

Of course the article drew scorn from a few in the individualist camp, an article written in response by Victor Metric scorned LA roundly and concluded with a request for funds to assist those in custody.

Garnier, of course, was nothing if not incensed and in order to get out in front of the criticism decided to do something truly seismic—he would write a challenge and send it in to one of the scions of the bourgeois press,

Le Atin, which published it on 20 March 1912.

In the letter addressed to specific detectives in the surete including Jouin, he taunted them and ridiculed the 10,000 fr offered to his companion Marie to betray him, adding, "...multiply the sum by ten, messiuers, and I will surrender myself to your mercy, bound hand and foot..."

He goes on to exonerate one of his friends caught in the dragnet, Dieudonne, and emphasized that he alone was guilty.

Lastly he declared that,

I know that there will be an end to this struggle which has begun between me and the formidable arsenal at Society's disposal. I know that I will be beaten; I am the weakest.
But I sincerely hope to make you pay dearly for your victory.

Concluding jauntily, "Awaiting the pleasure of meeting you...Garnier."

Another enclosed sheet of paper bore inked impressions of Garnier's index finger and right hand to prove the identity of the author.

Bonnot, not to be outdone by his partner walked into the offices of the *Petit Parisien* (a Parisian equivalent of the tabloid press today like the *Sun* in the UK or the *New York Post*), and placing his Browning menacingly on the desk of the journalist Charles Saurwein and stated that, *We'll fire our last round at the cops, and if they don't care to come, we'll eventually know where to find them.*

Then after picking up his pistol he walked nonchalantly out of the paper's office.

Of course the paper should have contracted the police immediately, it was the bourgeois thing to do, but the gang was slowly beginning to garner some mild popular sympathy, and the police, for whom the average Parisian felt at least a tinge of hostility, were sinking

low in the perceptions of the press.

As an example many journals had begun to call the gang "the tragic bandits" though the *Petit Parisien* had settled on the "Bonnot Gang," which would stick long after the gang and the journal ceased to exist.

The effect of these interactions with the press was to bring even more pressure to bear on the police to do something spectacular and apprehend the outlaws, and completely outrageous.

Garnier had been thinking about firepower a great deal, feeling that though the police in Paris carried only old cavalry revolvers the gang needed something truly intimidating to make the next robbery successful.

He finally found what he was looking for when he purchased four Winchester rifles from a local anarchist fence—basically the modern equivalent of would-be criminals among themselves with surface to air missiles, or rocket propelled grenades to rob a 7-11.

Car owners throughout Paris had become far more security conscious as a result of the spate of recent auto thefts, so in response the illegalists developed their final innovation to modern criminal activity- the car-jacking.

The gang, this time was made up of Soudy, Garnier, Bonnot, Valet, and the new guy, Monier. They armed themselves, including Soudy who carried the Winchester under his great coat, and took suburban trains into the countryside.

They disembarked at Villeneuve and walked as the final rays of sun peaked from behind trees into the forest to bed down for the night. they had selected a piece of road on the N5, a main north-south artery, and by mid-morning had found an ideal spot for their ambush.

Meanwhile at 7 am in Paris a brand spanking new

De Dion-Bouton 18 horsepower limousine, that had been ordered and purchased by the Comte de Rouge, was being revved and readied for delivery. Two men were in the car, a chauffeur in the pay of De Dion and a secretary sent by the Comte to make the 18,000 fr purchase; the Comte, who couldn't be bothered with the mundane, was sunning himself on the Cote d'Azur, waiting for his new car to be delivered.

Bonnot, Garnier, and La Science recognized that they had only once chance to obtain a car in this fashion, should a driver get past them, their whereabouts would immediately be flashed to the capital, including all the cops just waiting for the opportunity to pounce.

Luckily as they waited by the side of the road two horsecarts came spanking down the N5, the illegalists ran out flashing their weapons and seizing the two conveyances which they propped in the middle of the road.

At the same moment the yellow Dion-Bouton came into view. The car came to a halt and the anarchists walked with guns in hand towards the auto, La Science calling out, "It's the car we want."

The chauffeur pulled out his pistol, but he was too slow, Bonnot fired and shot him in the heart. Garnier, perhaps in response to Bonnot's shot, fired at the other passenger, hitting him four times in the hands, which had apparently been raised in protection.

The two bodies were dragged into the woods, the gang scrambled in and the Dion Bouton was turned around and roared north towards Chantilly.

They skirted Paris through the eastern suburbs and took the N16 to arrive two hours later at the offices of the Societe Generale in Chantilly, located on the main square.

Bonnot sat at the wheel while Garnier, La Science, Valey, and Monier walked into the bank. Soudy remained on the pavement outside the bank, the Winchester raised and ready. La Science called out, "Messieurs, not a word!" as the gang came charging into the office, one of the clerks instinctively dove for the floor, which caused Garnier to shout, "Fire!"

Garnier shot one of the clerks six times and La Science poured four shots into another teller, while Valet winged the youngest clerk, a sixteen year old, with a shot to the shoulder. The remaining bank employees escaped by diving out the back door as bullets zipped past them.

Monier stayed at the door while Garnier, finding a set of keys after a "Jesse James" leap over the counter said, "Get the money first," perhaps wishing to avoid the embarrassment of staring lamely at a pile of worthless bonds and checks.

The shooting obviously did not go unnoticed by the locals, including the bank manager who began to walk back across the square. Soudy leveled the rifle at him and shouted, "Hold it! Hold it or I'll pick you off," finishing the statement with four rounds fired over the man's head.

The manager wisely retreated in the opposite direction.

Soudy now began to fire rounds at anyone who ventured into the square as well as those who appeared in windows. The illegalists raced over out of the bank, guns roaring as cover for the retreat, and crammed themselves into the waiting car.

Soudy fired a final shot and ran after the already accelerating car, he slipped as he was jumping in but was

caught and hauled in by his comrades who realized that he had fainted in the excitement of trying to catch the auto.

In minutes the limo was racing south to Paris, and the relative safety of her teeming millions. Though sighted at numerous places on the return trip no effective chase was given and having abandoned the car, they hopped a fence and found themselves in Levallois-Perrer, a neighborhood swarming with police due to the presence of the headquarters of the then striking taxi drivers union.

The strike had lasted for several months and results in numerous violent collisions between the taxi drivers, strikebreakers, and of course, the police.

So the gang strolled right through the largest cluster of police in all of France with 50,000 fr in their pockets and no one paid them any attention at all.

Again the class struggle had reared up and provided the perfect screen for the illegalist insurrection to occur.

The robbery at Chantilly sent the representatives of law and order and especially the bourgeois press into apoplectic fits.

Meetings were held up and down the various chains of command, and like the September 11 occurrences, the final outcome was a forgone conclusion—unbounded police surveillance powers, augment by increased funding for the violation of rights, torture of suspects, whatever would bring the sad, and seemingly endless chapter to at least perceived conclusion.

Within 24 hours of the robbery raids took place across Paris, especially in the communities to the north and east, the "red belt" as it had been know since the days of the Commune.

L'Anarchie was raided for the third time (in all the

offices would be searched six times in as many months). The public mood at this time had turned from one of mild, silent approval for the Bonnot Gang to a raging hysteria-the image of a pale young man shooting at the honest, law-abiding denizens of a quiet Parisian suburb was unnerving to the point of psychosis for much of the bourgeois.

Gun sales spiked upwards as the middle and upper classes began to arm themselves in response to the possibility of confrontation with these neo-barbarians, and when the public realized that Bonnot had been trained to shoot and drive by no less a criminal conspiracy than the French army many wondered if the entire structure of sovereignty might not collapse with an armed forces made up of such malcontent recruits.

Further, like the resurrected Elvis, sightings of the gang began to be reported in such far flung places in Marseilles, Calais, and of course... Brussels.

In one incident, a Belgian stationmaster opened fire on a group of innocent, and probably stunned passengers convinced that the Bonnot Gang had decided to include train robbery in its repertoire.

In the working class neighborhoods, however, the mood was visibly different; kids exuberantly played "Bonnot Gang" with an unlucky few of the youngsters forced to play cops.

The Gang's Finale: For a Few Bullets More

After Chantilly, the gang split the proceeds and parted company.

Soudy, seeking some relief from his tuberculosis, traveled to Berck, a seaside health resort. With his paleness and long interludes of coarse, rattled coughing no

one expected to him to rejoin the gang.

Everyone else found safe houses and laid as low as possible, fully recognizing that anything appearing to be out of the ordinary could bring the attention of the neighbors and probably the police shortly thereafter.

The gang recognized that huge rewards were being offered for any information and that in working class areas the temptation must have been intense to turn informant.

Further the Surete was doing their best to plant as much suspicion as possible within anarchist circles, driving home the point made by Jouin that the bandits were "discrediting a great ideal," thereby casting the police in the unlikely role of guardians of the purity of anarchism.

The first to fall was Soudy who had been staying with friends at Berck. Jouin had been fed information detailing his whereabouts and as Soudy emerged from his friend's home and walked towards the train station five policeman jumped him.

An unidentified informant was paid 20,000 fr for the betrayal.

Raymond La Science was next.

He had taken refuge with an anarchist couple Pierre Jourdan and his lover Louise-Marcelline in Paris's 9th arrondissment. Louise-Marcelline was evidently the unidentified informer in this case, and as La Science appeared outside the apartment early one morning wearing cycling gear and with a new racing bike he was apprehended.

A search of his cycling shorts revealed sixteen one hundred franc bills and two loaded Browning 9mm pistols.

Monier was next, he had taken to hopping from hotel room to hotel room and had been impressively assiduous in his efforts to remain invisible until he met some anarchist friends for a meal in the boulevard Delessert; the meal party included Lorulot who was well known to the police and they had been tracking him for several weeks.

The gambit paid off, Monier was immediately identified and followed back to his hotel. Unwilling to wait for him to come out the police forced their way into his room and due to surprise took him without incident.

They noted that he had two loaded 9mm Brownings on the bedstand and had they been less quiet the arrest could have gone very differently.

Bonnot and Garnier would be less easy to take unawares, and they were both poised to take as many cops as possible with them into the abyss.

Bonnot had been staying with a friend Gauzy above his second-hand clothing store. As time had gone on, Gauzy had become more and more uncomfortable with the situation, and Bonnot, unwilling to remain in a darkened room for hours on end, had been out walking several times.

Meanwhile the Surete had patched together some loose leads and decided that many of the second-hand shops in working class areas may well be operated by fences, and had also linked a number of these shops to gang members.

Gauzy had finally prevailed upon Bonnot to find other accommodations, though Bonnot dithered away a day or two deciding what to do.

Gauzy was then surprised to see four bowler-hatted men enter his shop on the day Bonnot was to have left, timing it seems was neither on his side nor Bonnot's.

Jouin introduced himself and stated that he had a warrant to search the premises, and probably hoping that Bonnot had jumped out the window, Gauzy led the detectives upstairs to his apartment.

Gauze fumbled with the key as he unlocked the door and stood back for Jouin and Colmar to enter, as they did Bonnot who had been reading a paper by the window jumped up and grabbed for a small caliber pistol in his jacket pocket.

Join was on him in an instant, they wrestled and Bonnot, finally getting the pistol in hand fired three shots into the detective, the final bullet through the neck killing him instantly; a perfectly appropriate Stirnerian moment; the triumphant individual destroying the lead coil of the venomous state.

A fourth shot, probably fired from the floor, killed Colmar.

The third detective Robert dashed into the room and finding Colmar breathing shallowly hefted him on his shoulder and carried him down the stairs.

Bonnot, shoving Join's corpse off him ran down the hallway, through a window and into the street. His forearm, grazed by a bullet, trailed blood as he ran.

Bonnot spent three uncomfortable nights in the open, finally making it to the garage of an anarchist at the fringes of the gang, Jean Debois, in Choisy-Le-Roi where he spent the night.

Dubois was up early working on a motorcycle when sixteen armed men pulled up in several autos and rushed the garage. Dubois pulled a pistol and shot the detective closest to him in the wrist, but the other cops were ready and he was met with a hail of bullets, one striking him in the back of the neck killing him outright.

Bonnot, wakened by the din from downstairs, grabbed a gun and walked onto a small balcony overlooking the yards and stairs only to find the detectives just ascending to the room.

He fired catching the lead cop in the stomach, and then ducked back into the room to avoid the bullets flying at him.

The detectives summoned help from anywhere they could, including two companies of Republican Guards, a group of locals with pitchforks and shotguns (no, really—pitchforks), and further reinforcements from the Surete.

The battle lasted all morning with thousands of bullets tearing holes throughout the room where Bonnot was firing from, and Bonnot himself occasionaly walking out on the porch to take a few well-aimed shots at his attackers.

By noon, with the battle effectively a draw, the Surete men decided to try and blow the garage up with Bonnot inside. A cart piled with mattresses was rolled towards the building, the dynamite fuse lit and placed next to the wall. The fuse sputtered and died, causing the cart once again to roll forwards so that the fuse could be relit—this time successfully—though the charge was insufficient to destroy the garage.

Third time's the charm, with the dynamite charge this time large enough to level the building.

Bonnot, still alive though barely breathing, was rushed to the hospital, but died en route.

Two days later Bonnot and DuBois were buried surreptitiously in the paupers area of the cemetery at Bagneux. The graves were left unmarked so as to preempt any remembrance ceremonies.

This left Garnier and Valet at large and the Surete detectives were justifiably concerned.

Garnier had sworn in his letter to Le Martin to deal swiftly with informers and he was serious about the threat.

One of the men whom Garnier was sure had sold information to the police was Victor Granghaut, who had prearranged Carouy to stay with him; he was subsequently arrested the very same night.

Garnier had caught a train to Lozere and there waited for Victor to return from work. Victor and his father were walking back home from the station when Garnier stepped out of the bushes and in spite of the father's pleading and attempts to protect his son with an umbrella shot him once in each leg stating, "That will teach you to inform on Carouy."

The final battle took place in Nogent where Garnier, his companion Marie, and Valet had rented a suburban Bungalow.

The two men had been recognized on a bus to Nogent and it didn't take long for the police to identify the house that had been recently rented to three suspicious newcomers.

The illegalists were just finishing preparations for a simple vegetarian dinner when Valet, standing in the back yard taking in the air was accosted by a man wearing a red, white and blue sash who called in, "Surrender in the Name of the Law."

Valet realized immediately that the gaudily clad man wasn't a neighbor, and put a few rounds into the air as he dodged back into the house.

The gun battle that then erupted was fierce even by the standards of Bonnot's last stand.

A cease-fire was called for and the detectives yelled in for the men to surrender.

Marie ran out of the house into the hands of the detectives.

The two anarchists downed water and forgetting their restrictive diet, also drank some coffee to stay alert, though neither had any time to eat.

They then made themselves ready for the end.

They piled the francs they had stolen in the middle of the floor and burned them. They both stripped to the waist and loaded clip after clip of ammo for the seven 9mm Brownings in their possession, though they had no cartridges for the Winchesters which would have been infinitely more useful, and accurate, in the static gun battle that they were engaged in.

After Garnier had made sure that Marie was safe the battle rejoined with gusto.

As time went on the odds became increasingly ridiculous, eventually it was estimated that the anarchists were outmanned by a ratio of 500 to 1.

The two managed to hold out to midnight, a full six hours, when with the aid of sappers the house was finally destroyed by a blast of melinite.

The combatants on the side of the law made their way into the rubble and the brave detectives of the Surete shot both men, still alive, twice in the head, in direct violations of "standard" police procedures.

The bodies of Garnier and Valet were laid to rest very near the graves of their comrades in arms, Bonnot and DuBois.

Finally, there were those who had been arrested and now face trial, a total of 18 men and three women (Rirette, Marie, and Barbe)—a girlfriend of one of the out-

lying gang members).

The prosecution knew it had very little to go on, not one of the defendents was talking, the evidence was weak, very circumstantial and ultimately compromised in most cases by shoddy police work.

In fact there was no way that the prosecutors could state with any certainty exactly who had participated in what robbery. The accused languished in prison until 3 February 1913 when the court began to hear evidence.

In the interim Victor and Rirette began a rapid back-pedal from what had been written in *L'Anarchie*, complaining it had been misinterpreted, and that much of what they had said at meetings like the causeries poplaires went unrecorded and directly contradicted material that had appeared in printed—basically casting themselves in the role of the "honest intellectual" versus the "criminal illegalist" that the other defendants obviously were.

The final decision of the court and the sentences of some of the defendants follow:

The three women and Rodriguez the fence – Not guilty
La Science, Soudy, Monier- Guilty; Guillotined 22 April 1913
Kibalchich – Guilty; five years in prison, five in exile.

Of the three defendants sent to the guillotine, they all died well (that is, bravely and without regret).

Of the two "honest intellectuals" Kibalchich eventually changed his name (to Victor Serge) and his politics, joined the Bolsheviks, worked closely with the left-communists and later Trotsky only to be deported by Stalin in 1937.

Like his friend Trotsky he eventually made it to Mexico where he died of natural causes in 1947- though how he avoided the Stalinist ice-pick is hard to fathom.

Rirette spent the rest of her life damning the anarchists as publicly as she could—coming to the concul-sion in her memoirs serialized in the bourgeois *Le Matin*,

...behind illegalism there are not even any ideas.
Here's what one finds there: spurious science, lust, the absurd and the grotesque.

Maybe she did get it after all...

Parting Shots

The history of illegalism doesn't end here, a few others have stepped forward and picked up the theory and the weapons that death had pried from the mouldering hands of the Bonnot gang.

These include the Italian/German Horst Fantazzini, an individualist anarchist, who robbed his way across Europe during the 60s and 70s with a flair as yet unmatched among the criminal classes.

In one holdup he fled successfully on bicycle, he escaped from prison several times, and when a teller fainted during one of his bank robberies he sent her roses the next day. The press dubbed him the "kind bandit" thereafter.

He wrote an account of his escape from Fossano prison, which was eventually made into a movie, *Ormai e fatta!*

Fantazzini died in 2001 in a prison infirmary.

One of his daughters built a website to commemorate the life and exploits of her father (horstfantazzini.net) which is fun to look through.

As of today, the life and written works of Alfredo Bonnano continues the theory and praxis of illegalism and any of his articles is worth a read.

In terms of contemporary social movements the

Yomango is an ongoing social phenomenon in South America, Spain, and Italy devoted to open socially informed shoplifting conducted en masse.

The movement is going strong and since the world economy hit the skids in 2008 has if anything grown and become more accepted, to the point of being endorsed by several non-anarchist Spanish trade unions, who periodically sponsor mass shoplifting outings for their members.

There are obviously many other forms of illegalism that have been tried and used in the anarchist milleux and the above review is in no way an exhaustive account.

As an example all forms of squatting are by definition, illegal, regardless, the practice is engaged in, and approved of, by virtually every permutation of current anarchist theory or movement, and is usually justified in a conceptual framework that looks and tastes very illegalist.

In a practical sense; not all illegalists are squatters, but all squatters are illegalists.

Continuing on in a pragmatic manner, illegalism also provides some interesting insights into the ongoing conundrum of organization as it applies to anarchism.

Of note is the fact that while Bonnot and company had no formal structure, no rules for decision making, and little to say on the issue of organization, they do seem to provide some answers on the subject.

One of these solutions is the turning on its very head of the question of organization, which usually begins with the question, "what type of structure shall we create?"

The illegalists, however, in the example provided by their activity began with the question what shall we do, what activity is required for the successful realization of this project. Then based upon what it is that a group is

seeking to accomplish, the structure required to realize the activity comes into being.

Each of these solutions then is also tempered by the principle on its ability to realize the needs and desires of the individual, to safeguard her autonomy against the ever present likelihood that organizations will tend to blunt and ultimately deny the sovereignty of individual in favor of the growing power of the collective, especially with the passage of time.

In extremis some organizations exist with the sole purpose of maintaining their own existence: the nation-state is a good model of such circuitous existential theory, and certainly the police and the military are prime examples of the mailed fist that does nothing save preserve the sovereign status quo, and eliminate any contestation that could lead to either radical internal change (a relative impossibility) or insurrection.

The absurdity of the argument is often laid bare when fundamental principles are used to justify their own destruction.

The Occupy movement, for all its weakness, provided a perfect example of freedom of speech being justified to destroy freedom of speech—you can say whatever you want, just not at night, not in a public park, and not in New York.

Alternatively there is the example of military versus militia organization in the Spanish Civil War; a puzzle that probably accounted for numerous sleepless nights for Durruti and other FAI militants during the late summer and fall of 1936.

In this case the strategic objective of winning the war did little to inform the structure of the militias; rather the decade/century milita configuration was far better

suited to either the type of affinity group actions that the FAI excelled at, or at one step removed, the strike or insurrectionary committees, either regional or national in scope, that the CNT had utilized for its industrial contestation or the outright seizure of villages and towns and the inevitable declaration of "communismo libertario."

Durruti, in one of his moments of clarity, voiced the concern that the "discipline of indiscipline" was proving to be an ineffective tactic with which to fight a civil war.

I have no answer as to how the Spainards should have structured their militias, rather I am convinced that their chosen organization was sufficiently flawed as to allow them to lose twice, first to the Stalinists, and then to the fascists.

The simple, elegant illegalist "solution" to the problem of organization was neither new nor particularly innovative. The raiding parties of the Great Plains tribes were comprised in a very similar manner.

The "solution" then consists of a structure that is temporary—that ceases to exist past the accomplishment of the strategic goal for which the organization was brought into existence. The organization allowed for each of the individuals involved sufficient input so as to satisfy the need for participation in decisions that affect ones own life, especially those decisions that may lead to the maiming, capture or death of the organizations members.

Each of the individuals involved understood their various responsibilities and that knowledge allowed for tasks to be completed quickly and completely without the need for oversight (administration) nor the attendant operationalizing factor of oversight—discipline, and its sustaining hierarchy motivating principles—punishment and/or reward.

The illegalists also represent one of the last glowing embers of the association of anarchy with utopia; which would be brought back into a raging conflagration some seventy-five years later with an unlikely mixture of anti-civilization, anti-technology theory, the resurgence of combative, mobile affinity groups best exemplified by the "Vermont Family," urban squatters, and the re-discovery and re-popularization of 120 years of anarchist theory and history (including the Situationists and the Frankfurt School) by a well-connected group of writers, journalists and theorists linked together through zines, mail, and who found each other via the ultimate underground print media clearinghouse, *Factsheet Five.*

This strange mix of theory, personality and history would be brought to a near explosive mass via the catalyzing addition of various meetings and events including the 1986-1989 Continental Anarchist Gatherings (Chicago-SF-Toronto) and the Tompkins Square Park Riot of August 1988.

Grinding back to the 19th Century—Marx and Engels would use the term utopian as a way to criticize and infantalize not only those thinkers who had swum in the waters of socialism, communism, and revolution prior to their arrival, additionally the anarchists, especially Bakunin, would use the term utopian as an insult for all comers as they vied for political pre-eminence among the various population strata most likely to participate in revolutionary upheavals.

In the case of Bakunin the epithet was hurled without acknowledging the obvious and gnawing truth that most of anarchist theory and praxis was, in fact, pretty utopian.

The Paris Commune provided the political upheav-

al that materialized as the fork in the road that would effectively split the various revolutionary currents into utopian (anarchist) and anti-utopian (Marxist) camps.

Using then select activities of the Commune to illustrate this marked dichotomous political vision and simultaneously as real events that stirred the acrimonious stew then brewing between Marx and Bakunin, lets see what the Communards did that produced such antipathy—for the Marxists the high water mark of the uprising may be the Commune's outlawing of night work for bakers, a solid practical step towards socialism without a blemish of the idealistic or heroic, without any revolutionary mumbo-jumbo that they accused their adversaries of engaging in.

For the anarchists the destruction of the Vendome Column was the insurrectionary act par excellence—with all the possibilities the action entailed, the death (regicide? archicide?) of imperialism, militarism and nationalism, the proof of the malleability of the urban landscape to meet the needs of people, and finally the outrageous, side-splitting comedy of watching the bronzed, granite, phallus tumble grandly and flaccidly to the ground.

Not surprisingly the author of the night work legislation was Leo Frankel, a devoted follower of Marx, and the destruction of the Column was the brainchild of the artist Gustave Courbet, an admirer of both Proudhon and Bakunin.

Pushing on from the Commune into later European history one sees this dichotomy grow ever more striking, ever more profound.

The anarchists became the midwives of week long Social Republics, of risings doomed before the first shot was

fired, of being the guardians of insurrection that is "nowhere" because it is realized and dreamed of everywhere.

In the mind one sees the image of a Spanish peasant unable to read but staring at and moving rough, calloused fingers over the pictures of black flags and various images that adorn the latest issue of *La Revista Blanca*.

Anarchism is utopian because the anarchist vision is sublime, transcendent; even the poorest, most uneducated worker could viscerally relate to a future where bosses and work had been destroyed in favor of play as the dominant economic activity and a grand illuminating equality of resources, wealth and opportunities to learn and attain knowledge, and finally to participate directly without mediation in decisions that affected one's life.

Unlike the Marxist who envisioned a society very like the one she lived in, only in the communist world the workers were the masters, not the slaves. Marxism is anti-utopian because the communist vision is of a society where nothing, other than the class makeup of the new bosses, has changed.

The advent and activities of the illegalists, and the concurrent rise of the most possibillist of anarchist tendencies, anarcho-syndicalism, replayed in miniature the split that occurred after the Commune.

In this instance the reinsertion of utopian currents into anarchism, accomplished as the result of the individual writings of Zo d'Axa, among others, was offset by the growth of the syndicalist tendency, including the uptick in the census of various union bodies, especially those associated with the Confederation General du Travail in France, the IWW in the US and Australia, and of course the proliferation of soviets in Russia.

The strength of the syndicalist argument ultimately being contained in the non-utopian, practical method of building unions as the seeds of the new society, and also providing structure as the post-general strike world and how industry would be changed from a generator of profit to a liberator of human aspirations.

Of interest too is the seeming confusion that reigned at the "top" of these organizations especially the IWW, where Bill Haywood would respond as to whether he had read Marx's *Capital* with the snappy rejoinder, "No, but I have the marks of Capital all over my body."

This sentiment is echoed by Joe Hill, who while rotting in prison during the months that the State of Utah was figuring out the easiest way to justify his murder was asked by a local journalist whether he was a Marxist, to which h responded with the simple, and avowedly untrue, "Yes, I am and always have been."

Therefore as syndicalism sough to reject as much as possible the smear of utopianism , the closer the leaders and rank and file edged towards proclaiming the organization and its members Marxist.

The illegalists on the other hand never stood back from the glaring utopianism that characterized much of their theory.

Certainly Kibalchich was sufficiently clear in his theoretics that he acknowledged the basic utopianism that animated much of individualist anarchism, he was equally solid in translating illegalist activities into the living breathing insurrection that was then being fought out. Not to be put off to some great event scheduled to occur in the next few centuries, but a battle that was joined daily by the adherents of illegalism, and their supporters.

In this sense the insult to the anti-utopians was two-

fold, yes we are utopians, and yes we are utopians operating on the terrain of utopia—now—not in some far-flung future where our children's children will form of the general staff of an as yet unborn insurrectionary militia. Finally its also important to note the fundamental violence that such theories do to the Marxists, and some anarchists, who believe that only when the time has become ripe, through the collapse of the wage and profit system, the downhill slide from peak oil, or the moment when everyone, in a vast global pre-frontal cortex explosion of wisdom realizes that the total amount of debt, individual, sovereign, and corporate exceeds the total number of all possible form of profits and incomes with which to make the payments will a revolution become a viable alternative to the species.

As opposed to the very general utopian notion that basic human individual desire and need will be the sole motivating factors that will push the species from where it is now into the great necessity; utopia.

Finally, the real arguments made against illegalism were that of an early, seemingly meaningless death.

So I'll let Marcuse who stood with one foot in Marxism and other in utopia bring this essay to a conclusion,:
Under conditions of a truly human existence, the difference between succumbing to disease at the age of ten, thirty, fifty, or seventy, and dying a "natural" death after a fulfilled life, may well be a difference worth fighting for with all instinctual energy.
Not those who die, but those who die before they must and want to die, those who die in agony and pain, are the great indictment against civilization. They also testify to the unredeemable guilt of mankind. Their death arouses the painful awareness that it was unnecessary, that it could be otherwise.

It takes all the institutions and values of a repressive order to pacify the bad conscience of this guilt.

Once again, the deep connection between the death instinct and the sense of guilt becomes apparent. The silent "professional agreement" with the fact of death and disease is perhaps one of the most widespread expressions of the death instinct – or, rather, of its social usefulness.

In a repressive civilization, death itself becomes an instrument of repression. Whether death is feared as constant threat, or glorified as supreme sacrifice, or accepted as fate, the education for consent to death introduces an element of surrender into life from the beginning – surrender and submission. It stifles "utopian" efforts.

The powers that be have a deep affinity to death; death is a token of unfreedom, of defeat. Theology and philosophy today compete with each other in celebrating death as an existential category: perverting a biological fact into an ontological essence, they bestow transcendental blessing on the guilt of mankind which they help to perpetuate – they betray the promise of utopia.

Review of *Decolonizing Anarchism*

Decolonizing Anarchism: An Antiauthoritarian History of India's Liberation Struggle, Maia Ramnath (AK Press, Oakland CA , 94612) 291pp. $16.00 paperback.

Note: *The volume is copywritten by both AK Press and the Institute for Anarchist Studies—meaning that the standard anti-copyright caveat provided by most anarchist publishers does not apply. - PZS*

Before a review of the book it is necessary to note that the author is a member of the Institute for Anarchist Studies and is on the Historians Against War steering board. The former organization (according to its propaganda) is dedicated to providing a space for independent politically engaged scholarship that explores social domination and reconstructive visions of a free society. In other words she's yet another budding anarchist intellectual, like David Graeber, who by the age of forty will probably be tenured, eviscerated, and looking more towards the end of the semester than the end of capitalism. Which is fine, it's a living!

Let me first say that I really wanted to dislike this book, and I was not disappointed—though on occasion there are tidbits of historical interest. Dr. Ramnath begins with a rundown of the theoretical contradictions that always occur when discussing anarchism in relation to colonies, client states, and empires; first is what Fredy Perlman termed the continuing appeal of nationalism. Viet Nam stands as an excellent example of this conceptual quagmire, and it specifically relates to how

anarchists untangle the puzzle of exactly what to do, or not do when confronted with a Marxist-Leninist regime seeking to regain sovereignty over a disputed parcel of land—the classic case of "third-world anti-imperialist struggle." And though she misses it in her discussion, for those living in the US the problem was doubled by virtue of the fact that the belligerent imperial power also happens to be the nation-state claiming sovereignty over the city or town where they happened to live. So what do anarchists do in a case like that? Ignore the obvious and chase after a passing anti-Viet Nam war march (to "Ho" or not to "Ho") or do they move on to more local problems like the very existence of the imperial regime? Her responses appear in a series of oh-so-loaded questions and answers like "...should we object to a group's self-identifying as a nation per se?" And her response is the perverse and troubling," it's possible to concede a strategic identity politics...where the assertion of collective existence and demand for recognition functions as a stand against genocide, apartheid, systemic discrimination...." Which follows from her line of reasoning that it is possible to decouple nation from state, the former being the classic agglomeration of language, history, and culture that is used to justify shared interests, needs, culture, economic processes and of course—land. The nation-state argument has a history, none of which she seems too willing to mention, specifically the French Convention spent many late nights during the Year II sorting out just what was meant by the nation, la patrie, and their conclusions were never without the implied hyphenated political modifier...state. As Ramnath jauntily editorializes, "The devil is in the hyphen." Which is not particularly true but it is the best sentence in the book. She then asks, "Is it possible then to conceptualize the liberation of nation from state?" Assuring us that this what the politically immature Bakunin, in his guise as Pan-Slavist, was really

doing. Ultimately though, it's a dishonest use of Bakunin, as if Marx could be taken solely for his 1844 manuscripts while ignoring the evil machinations of the First International and the surreal economics of Das Kapital—he wasn't really such a bad guy—when you get to know him. Bakunin's work should be used by anarchists when he was an anarchist and not in his petty Slav nationalist phase. Finally she asks, "does that mean that the most fully developed form of anti-colonialism should be something that resembles anarchism?" Unfortunately for her, history has already provided an answer to the question in a resounding No! Once the empire is thrashed and the colony is destroyed the nation-state is always lurking in the wings, in the role of decolonizer, to pick up the pieces and cudgel the malcontents back into the mines.

Then we finally get to the red meat of her argument regarding decolonization. She correctly defines colonization as functioning on multiple levels, military, cultural, ideological and then concludes that "total decolonization would mean working on all these levels in addition to (but not instead of) tackling capitalism and the state...." Note here her inability to move into the final realm of critical thought; she stands firmly in the dominant culture and shies from naming the real culprit which if mentioned would immediately vitiate all her arguments. The enemy is civilization itself, not its various artifacts. The roots run deep, and to be critically consistent the axe must be applied there, not to the branch.

Ramnath then asks one of those non-question questions that plague the academic, is anarchism modern or anti-modern, or in her phrase is it "a child of the Enlightenment or its counterrevolution?" Dr. Ramnath seems to have missed, or perhaps discounts, the work of Horkheimer and Adorno which lays bare the inherent unanimity of both the modern and anti-modern. The contradiction is not between the two

but within the two and is also manifest in the question itself. The dominant society triumphs when pseudo-questions are taken for real and reification is the price for asking the gypsy. Regardless, she then runs through a quick though quirky discussion of Modernity/Anti-Modernity which after burying it under a ton of academish (the lingua franca of the dangerously overeducated) arrives at the conclusion that both are necessary and uses the ludicrous metaphor of making lemonade (too much modernity—sour; too much anti-modernism—sweet) in terms of how theorists should respond to such a non-query query.

That said she then goes on to provide some nice historical examples of Indian anarchists and their activities against the British, including their time residing the United States and elsewhere. I liked this section and it is still astonishing to me how well connected the various anarchist milieus were in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

Among the malcontents she discusses is Har Dayal, born in 1884 or 5 and originally sent to Oxford, the British were salivating over this new bureaucrat they could back into the colony to help smooth over the exploited. Dayal was too smart to stay at Oxford though and quit months prior to graduation. The anti-colonial virus had infected the young man and he started cranking out some very seditious stuff. He returned to India and then jumped to Paris to avoid arrest after a police crackdown following a bombing eventually landing in...Berkeley! He had drifted from anti-colonialism by then to anarchism, and he was in the right spot (the Bay Area) at the right time (1911) to make the maximum amount of trouble. Har Dayal worked with the Wobblies, the then-restive Indian community, and just about anybody else willing to fight for freedom. By 1913 he was credited with writing the first article by an Indian on Marx, whom he praises as a moral

exemplar (?!??), but whom he takes to task for concepts like class struggle which he interpreted as class-selfishness. Dayal was criticized for his self-imposed exile by some of his co-conspirators who wondered why he didn't return to India and start some shit. He wrote a pamphlet on the first anniversary of the Hardinge bombing, a propaganda by the deed event where several conspirators made and tossed a bomb at the Viceroy and his minions while they were riding on an elephant. The Viceroy and his wife lived and the event brought down the forces of law and disorder hard on the then simmering revolutionary movements in the Punjab, and among the Bengalis in Lahore and Delhi. Dayal's pamphlet includes the lines, "Don't sit there—kill or be killed, do a great deed before you pass on." and "Blessed is the death of a man if he suffers martyrdom for the sake of freedom." By 1914 the US authorities were growing tired of Dayal and they issued an order for his arrest and deportation, presumably to the UK for further abuse. Dayal, however, after being interrogated, and with some verbal flourishes, was let go and he hopped to Switzerland to avoid deportation and possible extradition to the UK. After a few more years he finally returned to the UK, earned his PhD and settled into teaching—yet one more activist swallowed by the Academy, and in a book written by an academic—ironic, sad. Dayal's story is only one of several mini-biographies in the book and all were new to me, most are interesting, one or two are engrossing.

"Decolonization" is one of the new buzz words for leftish anarchist theorists and it has some very disturbing ramifications, as I hope this review hints at. It feels almost like the '60s are playing out again at the level of some really awful, ill-conceived theory. It should have been obvious though that the minute the anarchist milieus began to tackle globalization at any level other than physical force that colonialism,

imperialism, nationalism, and anarchist responses to these various criminal enterprises would need to be sorted out. Decolonizing Anarchism reads like it was written in 1972 and not 2012. The material for a crushing anarchist critical response is readily available to any theorist willing to do the work. This background material includes the histories and theoretical work of anarchists, left-communists, and even, ugh, nationalists as they confronted (and continue to confront) Empire. Suffice it to say that any one of these threads provides enough material to lay a solid foundation when dealing with globalization, colonial rule, and military contestation. On the other hand Dr. Ramnath's sneaky return to nationalism, her need to roll identity politics into colonization, and the insane binary theoretical prism she applies when she confronts the problem all lead one to a place of déjà vu; we've been here before. The enemy, Empire, and its apologists are not stuck in some fascinated fawning for the past, and they have moved faster and further than any of the petites Ramnaths currently receiving doctorates. A real challenge to this mess is grounded in today, and is ready for tomorrow. Dr. Ramnath's critique is grounded in yesterday and is ready for the Anthropology Department meeting at 4 pm. Anarchy must do better.

Dispatches

Dispatches from Rojava
2015

Rojava Dispatch One

Greetings from the Revolution

The young Kurdish woman, a border worker, walks me down to the launch on the Tigris River, I look out over the water and shallow canyon that 10,000 years ago gave birth to animal domestication, agriculture, complex hierarchical societies, in a word—civilization. She hands me my passport, says good luck and I step into the launch. It slowly glides across the river, the two or three other men in the boat talk in Kurmanji and generally ignore the clueless American, rendered in their native tongue, merikik. As we draw to the far shore the difference between the border sites operated by the Kurdistan Regional Government and the Autonomous Kurdish Region is obvious, the former is huge with multiple buildings, paved roads and two restaurants, the latter is several card tables set on the pebbled beach of the Tigris. Two young members of the internal Rojava security force (Asayîş) search through suspect bags, they look at me, smile and return to their work. Oddly, at a border crossing, I feel, for the first time ever, welcome. There are a few large tents set on the beach to cover the overheated who are waiting to cross, and that's it. I had been given a contact name and when I mentioned it to one of the Asayîş she waved me over to a man who arranged passage for me up the hill to the original Syrian border facility by car. There I met my contact and was served the ubiquitous sugared glass of tea. A beverage that by this time I had drunk enough of to not just stretch my bladder, but to break it. I sip the tea and he calls a trans-

lator to help with our discussion. I introduce myself and what I hope to accomplish in Rojava – some sense of the institutions that the Kurds have implemented since the stabilization of the battlefront; including the local assemblies, how they interact with the militias, the executive councils, and some of the new institutions – schools, universities and infrastructure that the PYD and their allies have built. He abruptly asked what I needed, after which I just about dropped my tea, and then mumbled sheepishly," A car? A translator?"

He nodded and indicated that the PYD could provide that. He did want to make clear several things, first the PKK and the PYD are two separate and non-contiguous entities. Next that what is happening in Rojava is a direct reflection of the ideas and philosophy of Abdullah Öcalan (pronounced in Kurmanji, Ojalan, you fucking heathens). I nodded, noting the twingy feeling in my gut of hero worship, then reminded myself that this hero is buried so deep in a Turkish prison that they probably won't let him out after he dies. I was given a car and driver and sent to Amuda, to make contact with folks at the cantonal PYD media center. The next three hours were spent driving across Rojava, a really unique mix of mountains, plains, agriculture, oil wells, villages and people. The Asayîş check points were entertaining, the soldiers would look at the driver, then at me and say," Thank you," or nod. My tattoos raised an occasional Kurdish eyebrow. The folks on the street were wide-eyed, and silently kind.

In Amuda I met with the media folks and they asked me what I wanted to do, I set out my ideas and goals (once again) and they decided to send me to Kobani first thing as the weather looks it will rain by the end

of this week or the beginning of next. The roads are a mélange of asphalt, dirt, and in one or two places gaping pits left by ISIS car bombs. Therefore a good solid rain can really stop movement on the roads. Finally, the media people sent me to a house for journalists run by the YPG—communal living—but not a problem. At the house there was a smattering of journalists, some folks from the Netherlands helping to revamp a local hospital. There is a CNN crew here trying to make some kind of story out of Rojava, and since there is currently no huge amount of bloodshed here—it's obviously not a great way to sell advertising. I have been listening to them prepare a video report for the past half hour in which—-basically nothing happens—oh, and a YPJ militiawoman gets asked pointed, burning questions like," Do you want kids, or to stay in the militia?" Devastating. I always wanted to listen to a CNN report being prepped. One off the bucket list.

So tomorrow it's off to Kobani for several days. I am in one of the sketchiest places on earth, surrounded by friends—I am not afraid. More later…

Rojava Dispatch Two

The Road to Kobane/The Skeletal City

It is dark in Kobane, far darker than what you'd expect for a city of 150,000 souls. A few lights wink and crackle out of the encroaching dust and night, and the stillness is broken by the noise of grinding electrical generators and the sound of dumptrucks being filled with rubble and then driving off to one of the dumps outside the city center. It's almost a year since the siege and there is still no electricity. I am sitting on a porch of the only real

hotel in Kobane sipping (yet one more) sweetened tea in a glass. I'm glad I made it from Amuda to here, the road was long, the road was creepy, but now, the road is over.

My driver picked me up at 6am in the morning after a sleepless night at a YPG outpost in Amuda. As I walked out the door a YPG soldier threw me a warm pita. I folded it into quarters and put it into my shoulder bag—something to eat on the way. I left way too early to have breakfast. The guy who picked me up, Salah, was driving one of the ever-present white Hyundai (or Toyota) vans, I crawled in the front and we sped off. It takes four hours to get from Amuda to Kobane, assuming the road's not closed for any reason.

The scenery was pretty much the same between Amuda and Serekaniye, more villages, hundreds of villages, and fields that were not fallow were filled with cotton and melon.

Between the border with the KRG and Serekaniye there's very little to indicate that the Kurdish Autonomous Region is at war with anyone. Once into Serekaniye that impression dissolves rapidly. Large buildings are studded with pockmarks from small arms fire, and here and there one shows signs of being hit by larger ordnance. In fact Serekaniye was one of the side battles fought prior to the Siege of Kobane in November of 2012. It lies directly on the road to Kobane, sits right on the Turkish border, and if it had been taken by al-Nusra (the Islamist terrorists de jour at that point) Kurdish supply lines to Kobane would have been severed. The YPG responded rapidly to the threat and fought viciously, eventually routing the jihadis. The area around Serekaniye is still somewhat contested though final mop up conducted during the spring seems to have ended

any military threat of losing the city.

And on the road one can see just how serious the YPG/J and Asayis take the threat—multiple roadblocks and traps are set between Serekaniye and Kobane. The militias have no intention of paying twice for the city of Kobane. At one point we passed a mine that had blown out half the road and eventually were brought to a stop by heavy construction equipment. A rocket had hit the road in the night and it was closed definitely. My driver shrugged, and we set out across a dirt road to go around the obstruction. We had gone about five miles when we encountered an Arab militia checkpoint. Salah pulled up spoke a few words in Arabic and then asked quite clearly, "YPG?"

To which the response was a headshake and the mumbled acronym in Arabic of some other militia. My driver winced, and we drove on. This is where my nerves started get the best of me and I had him stop and reassure me that it was okay. He shrugged and said, "Syria." I then knew where we were. In some of the areas of Rojava small enclaves have declared for Syria, this includes the section of Qamishli next to the Turkish border, and evidently the tiny village we were driving through—as evidenced by a Syrian flag floating proudly from a telephone pole. A few more turns and we were back on the road headed to Kobane, passing an Asayis or YPG checkpoint every ten miles. Landmarks I had come to appreciate and look forward to for a variety of reasons.

On the last approach into Kobane from the east you are finally aware that, yes, you are in a war zone. A large ridge of earth has been erected effectively screening the city from approach and every here and there tank traps can be seen jutting out from the sand. Passing this earth

wall the city rises up and shows its wounds. Large areas of the outer city have been turned into great dumps of concrete, twisted steel and burned out cars. Then a building catches your eye, it is only half standing and leans oddly against its neighbor; its floors in various states of anti-Euclidean geometry. By the time you come to the city center you encounter whole blocks razed, pounded to rubble, and here and there one sees a building untouched by even small arms fire surrounded by the hulking wrecks of its former neighbors. Luck counts. The streets are dusty, and an occasional water tanker passes in a vain attempt to keep the air breathable. This in combination with the backhoes digging out the wreckage one scoop at a time and the constant movement of heavy trucks as they take the detritus to the growing concrete and steel fields ensures that Kobane is almost always drowning in dust. In fact my first night I walked out at twilight and the city looked more like an impressionist painting by Monet than anything else. Buildings melded into each other in the dust, colors and shapes softened and were lost. A blurred x-ray of a city.

In spite of this people move to Kobane daily, in fact with the cheap real estate—you pay what you can afford—there is something of a run on property. As an example an Arab man I spoke to bought a house, complete, for around 15,000 Syrian Pounds ($80 at today's exchange rate). Not bad.

It's late, I'm tired and have developed a serious negative attitude towards the Syrian squat toilet. Tomorrow it's time to look into the issue of revolution, and speak to the residents of this city in the process of slow rebirth.

Rojava Dispatch Three

Members of Commune Sehid Kawa C
Decide on New Boundaries

The two Hyundai minivans cruise caravan style through the backstreets of Kobane. In the first van are two representatives of the Kobane Canton's TEV-DEM, the body charged with implementing Democratic Confederalism. In the trailing minivan I ride with the translator and driver. Tiny children play on either side of the street and seem ambivalent to the passing cars, if they can survive a month long siege by ISIS, a few stray cars are nothing.

I had met Ahmad Shaif at the Kobane Canton Center, a bullet-pocked building set on a hill in Kobane. In previous years it had been the government center for the Syrian state and was subsequently expropriated by the Kurds after the representatives of Assad's regime exited the canton post-haste. Ahmad is one of several TEV-DEM administrators, and his office bare of paperwork, computers or any other item one would associate with a workspace in the West, is the place where Kobane residents come to for assistance in maintaining their communal councils. We had met and he had invited me to a council commune meeting he was helping to facilitate. I was in, definitely in.

Our vehicle stopped on a side street and an older man greeted us, hands shook all around, I was introduced and welcomed. We went through a rubbled courtyard and up a flight of steps. Shoes were kicked off, and we entered into a room fully carpeted with cushions spread sofa like around the walls. A window opened onto the room and several bullet holes impinged the glass, these projectiles had traced a neat line of holes

into the concrete of the far wall. Above this damage, a picture of Ocalan was hung, draped on either side by YPG and YPJ flags. The room started to fill with men, most older and Kurdish, and one or two Arabs. Women slowly joined the group as well, the older women, their heads swathed in scarves, would take turns shaking hands around the room and then sit. Men and women sat apart, the empowerment of women not yet extending to the predefined Middle East cultural space.

Mr Shaif began saying that it was a pleasure to be welcomed by the council, and that he was happy with the number of people attending (18 total, 10 men, 7 women—and me). He then drew out a map and laid it on the carpet, pointing to a block in a tangle of lines and circles meant to represent the Sehid Kawa (Martyr Kawa) neighborhood of the city. He continued that with the recent influx of immigrants into the city they were expecting the commune to expand, and that if it grows larger than 100 families it may be too unwieldy to be responsive. Possible geographic divisions were discussed with the council; a few questions, a few answers, some leaning over the map and nodding. He finished by saying that the division of the commune, if any, was up to them. He wanted to present the issue and whatever they decided was fine. Just call with an answer.

I was introduced and got a chance to ask a few questions. I asked about what they do, on a regular basis, as a council and got a wild range of responses, from dealing with marital issues, helping get gas and rides to and from clinics, shopping, whatever was needed, whatever was urgent. Finally a man said that during the siege it was the council that had kept the commune fed and clothed, that helped with YPG intellingence gathering

and that when the fighting became desperate commune members were issued Kalashnikovs and fought with the YPG to save their neighborhood. I asked if all were given weapons, including the women. He nodded and said everyone willing to fight, fought.

My curiosity got the better of me and I asked about the line of bullet holes in the wall. The man who had initially welcomed us stood and pointed out the window to a two story building some two hundred feet away. Pointing, he indicated the line of sight between the buildings top floor and the damaged wall in his house. Then holding an invisible Kalashnikov he sighted the building and pretended to shoot back. Saying that he had returned fire and that the gunman had eventually left.

With my questions done they asked me what the Americans thought of Kobane. I said many supported their Revolution, many wanted to hear more, and those ignorant enough to have an opinion without information didn't matter. There were some smiles and nods—especially the women, a few seemed surprised at my directness. Finally a young women of fifteen asked me what I thought. I closed my eyes for a moment and said, "What's happening here may be part of the future, not just for the Kurds, but for everyone. I know I feel welcome here, and safe. And as small as that is, it's a big change from much of my experience."

Ahmad then rose and thanked the group, we all shook hands again—there were some touching of hands to the chest, and we left.

Back out on the street the children were busy playing, somewhere a dog barked and the drivers were cranking over the vans engines. I stopped Ahmad and asked about how the communes had formed, did TEV-

DEM have responsibility for that task. He shook his head, "Some formed spontaneously, some we helped get started, many have yet to become stable, with strong council members. It's a process, and in Kobane the siege speeded up the formation of the communes, but the re-building and lack of resources has now slowed it. We can't stop though, these communes are at the center of society."

He nodded and left. I climbed into the van and set out for my hotel, some coffee and to think through this thing. This new thing.

(The name of the commune, Sehid Kawa C [Martyr Kawa C] is derived from the name of the neighborhood in Kobane—Sehid Kawa and C designates it as the third commune formed. Many of the city's areas are being renamed for the YPJ/G fighters who were killed in those respective neighborhoods. Martyrs, their lives and deaths form a large part of Kurdish resistance consciousness and symbolism. More later…)

Rojava Dispatch Four

The Return; Eighteen Heroes Go Home for the Last Time

The blood of martyrs never touches the ground.

Kurdish Proverb

So I had been kicking around Kobane for a day or two and had made some good contacts in the media center and also the YPG. One afternoon the translator and I had stopped by to see what the YPG were up to; it was quiet, mostly. Then a commander came walking through talking rapidly and pointing. I looked at the translator and

he said that the YPG are helping to escort the bodies of 18 YPG/J fighters from Kobane Canton to Cizere Canton for final burial. There was some kind of ceremony that was supposed to happen too. So we saddled up the Hyundai minivan and followed the racing YPG cars to wherever it was they were going.

We landed at a building with an enclosed courtyard near Kobane's sook. It looked like it must have been a sports club, likely volleyball as it had changing rooms and a volleyball court sized enclosed area (As soccer is to Brazilians, so volleyball is to the Kurds, an obsession, a crazed, fan-driven juggernaut). The building had been expropriated and given to the Institute for the Families of the Martyrs, a revolutionary institution to provide support for folks who lost people in the fighting, and to keep the memories of the martyrs alive. Not that the latter task needs much energy, the photos of martyrs are ubiquitous. They are hung in shop windows, on poles, on the walls of offices, in magazines, in Asayis and YPG outposts, in town squares, in schools; in fact, basically, everywhere. And these posters and what they represent resonate deeply with the Kurds. What is interesting in all this is the anonymous nature of the Martyrs, there aren't just one or two, or even dozens, there are literally thousands. Sure, some stand out, like Arwin Mirkhan, a young PYJ fighter who with her team was leading the final assault on Mishtehnur hill above Kobane. They were separated from the main assault body and shot up piece meal by Daesh (terrorists) fighters. With all her comrades dead or gravely wounded she resolved not to be taken alive and sold into slavery or beheaded. In the chaos of the final seconds of her life Arwin Mirkhan doused herself with a Molotov cocktail and lit a match.

At the center a hundred people or so have gathered, women sit in one room and men in the other waiting for the arrival of the Cizere delegation to accept the bodies of the dead. It is quiet, my TEV-DEM contact, Mr. Shaif is there and he thanks me for attending. We wait, we talk, we drink tea. An old bus, with windows missing is eased into the courtyard, we wait some more. Finally the Cizere contingent arrives, older men and women, some TEV-DEM, some of the parents and family of the martyrs, some private folks. They are lead into an open room and the certificates for burial and death are passed ceremoniously to them. They accept. There are no tears.

The Kobane and Cizere contingent board the bus, I wheedle a seat for the translator and me. We drive to the Martyrs cemetery, some words are spoken by people representing Kobane thanking Cizere and the sacrifice that the fighters made for the freedom of Kobane. The Cizere contingent affirms their support and commitment to Kobane and the Revolution. The occasion is brief, solemn. More than one mother of a fallen fighter is in the audience, yet it is quiet. There are no tears.

We are now late and the old bus blasts like a rocket back through the dusty streets. The area around the Institute is alive with activity as cars carrying the flag draped coffins of the fallen pass by the gate and people look on from the surrounding streets. I dash around the corner to see what's happening at the gate to the center. The women have come out of the institute compound and stand chanting on the streets, fingers raised in the V for victory salute. The individual cars carrying the heroes pass the saluting crowd, driven by YPG soldiers who return the V salute. The women chant in both Arabic and Kurmanji, occasionally making the zazi, the

uniquely regional feminine ululation, which can be heard piercing the still heavy air.

I look on and without thinking I raise my hand in a V salute, but remain silent. There is no longer seeing or hearing this scene, only feeling it. My throat tightens and I find myself hating and loving in the same moment. Loving these young fighters who died for freedom, real freedom; and hating the fact of their deaths, too young, too brave, too many, and those who killed them—Daesh scum. If I could have killed every Daesh fighter in that moment, I would have. Every. Last. One. I reel in my emotions and look over to the gathered women on my right. Their faces are a blur of sadness, gratitude, and determination. I realize that this wasn't about the Siege of Kobane, it was about the next, inevitable battle. It was about those who will die, as much as those who have. And there are no tears. Except my own.

Rojava Dispatch Five

The YPG/YPJ; Militias That Grow Hope

YPG dimeşe, erd û ezman diheje
(YPG marches, earth and heavens tremble)

YPG motto

" Wait....what....we're lost?" Mohammed the translator nods and I turn to the driver. He shrugs. I had headed out in Qamishli to do an interview about the Hêza Parastina Cewherî (HPC, Self Defense Forces), the new citizen's militia formations in Rojava. The driver—per every other taxi driver on earth—knew a short cut that would get us there on time, guaranteed. Problem was

he knew where we were, but couldn't find the address of the HPC. So as we sat on a corner deciding what to do, I noticed several yellow YPG flags floating over an old fence. The driver pointed and shrugged, indicating maybe they know. Couldn't hurt.

We all hop out of the taxi and approach the YPG outpost through a tangle of tank traps, concrete barriers and mud. The fighters at the gate are older than most I've met before, with graying beards, dark, tanned skin, and wrinkles. First thought, these guys look tough, real tough. We shake hands and when they find out I'm an American, one goes to tell the Commander. He returns with a tall well-built balding man, with clear grey eyes. We shake hands and he introduces himself. He is the Commander of the Qamishli Cizere Canton T.S. Cemal (Martyr Cemal), a commando with approximately four hundred fighters (four companies). He invites us in for coffee or tea, and to meet the fighters. What the hell. I'm late for my interview, it's chilly—a coffee would be nice, I want to meet the fighters and I like this man.

The Yekîneyên Parastina Gel (YPG, People's Defense Units) and the Yekîneyên Parastina Jinê (YPJ, Women's Defense Units) are the armed backbone of the Revolution. The YPG, formed in 2004 (YPJ in 2012), is no army. It is a militia, a people armed, in the best sense of the word. Some facts…

YPG/J Organization (Unit Name and Size)
1) Team, six to ten fighters
2) Suite, 2 Teams, twelve to twenty fighters
3) Block (Kurmanji—garug), two suites, twenty four to forty fighters
4) Company, 2 Blocks, forty eight to eighty fighters

5) Estimated Total YPG/J Census, fifty thousand fighters
6) There are no officers. When engaged in operations, the fighters choose (by vote or consensus) Team/Suite/Block/Company Leaders. When idle, there is no leadership structure at any level, save Regional Commands. Commanders are chosen (vote or consensus) for regions and Cantons (Kobane, Qamishli) and can only serve six months in any given commando. They are then replaced. There is no re-election.

The Commander and I talk as we set off to the barracks. He tells me the men are rested, ready to fight, though the area has been quiet for months. The commando deploys, on a revolving basis, 15 fighters per week to the front. He has only one new recruit, a boy of 16, who left Aleppo and crossed Daesh lines to join the YPG. Breakfast is over and the fighters are lounging near the barracks. They see the Commander and me moving towards them and a few start walking over, then more follow. I introduce myself through Mohammed, they seem surprised that an American would visit; one or two look down, boots shuffle in the mud. I move closer and start shaking hands, I look in their eyes, I mumble thank you in English. The fighters nod, they smile, they get it. One or two say in Kurmanji, "You are welcome."

I ask if I can take some pictures, the Commander maneuvers the fighters onto the tarmac to a spot in front of a large YPG flag snapping in the wind. A few photos, and as we walk off for coffee several of the less shy militiamen grab my arm and ask for individual or group photos. I stand with the men, arms on each other's shoulders, we smile at the camera. In that moment one word flashes into my mind like summer lightning;

a Spanish word, from a different insurrection and a different time, *Hermanos*.

A table is brought out and several cups of steaming, brackish Turkish coffee are set. Mohammed, the taxi driver, the Commander and I sit and drink while the fighters stand and look on. I ask some questions. Most are from Cizere, many from the city of Qamishli. They tell me that their fight isn't just for the Kurds, but for the whole world. And not just to defeat Daesh, but to win a Revolution. They want me to understand this. That it is important. I tell them I do understand. I tell them I believe it also.

The YPG/J have developed some unique protocols regarding training, deployment, and morale. Some more facts...

1) Training for a YPG/J fighter lasts forty five days

2) After training, the fighter is asked where and what type of duty s/he would like to do. They can opt for front-line service, tactical reserves, Turkish border patrol, internal checkpoints, or logistics and communication. The choice of duty, where to serve, and how long to serve, is solely the individual fighter's.

3) Leave in the YPG/J varies with commando and combat situation. When idle, single men, and most YPJ fighters (who are usually unmarried) go on leave 4 days a month. Married men serve one week, and week off. When engaged in battle, leave is still offered to the fighters, but is rarely taken. One Kobane Commander joked that the seige lasted only a month because the married fighters realized that the more Daesh they killed, the sooner they would see their wives and children.

4) Food, clothing and shelter are provided to all YPG

fighters, they also receive compensation amounting to about $100/month—for odds and ends, cigarettes, candy, amusement, travel, what have you. This seems small by US standards, but in Rojava it can go a long way. I pay about one dollar for a pack of Gauloises Blondes, and a kilo (2.2 pounds) of candy will set you back $0.75.

The cups are drained, time to go. I rise and thank the Commander again. He thanks me, and walks off to his duties. I begin shaking hands with the militiamen, saying thank you to each one, holding eye contact. Now, I need them to understand. The fighters form a line as I move so I can spend a moment of time with each of them. As I pass down the row it feels like a chunk of steel has settled in my heart. The first older soldier we met has been by my side the entire time. He follows us to the taxi. I extend a hand and to show our mutual respect, we kiss each other on the right cheek, the left cheek and then the left shoulder.

Back in the car I start thinking about the HPC interview up ahead, and then my eye catches the yellow YPG flag, still dancing in the morning breeze. There is a popular song in Arabic which include the lyrics, "God save the YPG; they protect the people; Arab, Kurd and Christian are brothers, they protect the land and grow hope." And I think to myself: yes. Protect this militia of individuals who fight with their whole heart, who are fearless, who are kind, who grow hope, and who I have known for a short time as brothers. May their desires, for peace, for freedom, to be with their families and friends, become reality.

I looked at the taxi driver motioning forward with my hand and said, "So?"

He fired off some rapid Kurmanji to Mohammed

who translated," He said you forgot to ask about the HPC address..."

Rojava Dispatch Six

Innovations, the Formation of the Hêza Parastina Cewherî (HPC)

There is a small cemetery on the side of the 712 highway as it crawls its way westward out of Kobane. There are roughly 100 graves there, they are well-kept, some sprout plastic flowers, and small mementoes can be seen that have been placed atop others. The cemetery is marked by a sign and a large poster of the martyrs buried there. This poster, however, is markedly different than most YPG/J martyr remembrances; this one includes pictures of old folks, newlyweds, teenagers and the very young. For this cemetery is dedicated solely to those who lost their lives during the massacre of June 25, 2015. On that night some 100 Daesh, disguised as Asayîş, infiltrated the Turkish border, exploded several car bombs and then began to systematically massacre anyone they could lay their hands on. An estimated 233 civilians were killed over the ensuing three days, including two of the driver's uncles. Which is how I found this place; he had asked for a moment to stop by and tend the graves. I told him of course and asked if he came to the cemetery often.

"Every week," was his response.

I finally found and met Aram Qamishlo, the HPC Director for Qamishili. The HPC compound where he works sits right behind the YPG barracks described in Dispatch Five. The HPC headquarters is yet another enclosed compound, a former storage area for the moribund Chemins de Fer Syriens railway system. According to Aram, the

idea of formal defense units directly responsible to, and for the defense of, the communes had long been part of TEV-DEM discussions. The policy to further decentralize militia and security responsibilities with the concomitant devolution of power into the communes being the overarching priority. Significantly however, Aram states that the final push for the HPC came not from above, but from the communes. Prior to the HPC, each commune had implemented some level of security force, comprised of their own members and responsible to the commune council. This proved insufficient so the Qamishli communes requested that the Cizere Executive Council designate a name for the units, provide weapons training, a uniform, and outline specific duties for the militia. In March of 2015, and as a result of the relative stability of the region, the first units of the Hêza Parastina Cewherî began training and deploying in Cizere Canton, specifically Qamishli.

The driver, Mohammed the translator, and me wander among the graves. There are others here too, family, friends. They tend the graves of their loved ones. Hands, earth, sadness. One or two small boys play at tag while their parents clean the dry mounds of paper and rubbish. The graves are a sphinx. All of the headstones are in Arabic, which I can't read. Even the dates are undecipherable. I continue walking, grave to grave, row to row, then one catches my eye. The dates and name are in Latinized script. This person was named Nujiyan Gever and s/he was born on October 14, 2014 and died on July 2, 2015. I count the months in my head quickly—a baby. Nine months old. Mohammed reaches out and takes my arm as I crouch to my knees. In my mind the simple phrase—a baby, Nujiyan Gever, nine months

old – repeats over and over. I begin to feel unwell.

The HPC, like the YPG/J has developed innovative protocols for recruitment, training, and deployment. Some facts...

1) Each commune elects two people to participate in the HPC. In practice there are far more volunteers for the HPC than it could possibly train and supply.

2) HPC recruit training lasts seventeen days.

3) TEV-DEM and YPG/J take equal responsibility for training the HPC volunteers. The militias train on weapons and tactics and TEV-DEM train on the ideas of Democratic Confederalism. Both are considered essential for the HPC recruit to accomplish the mission of self defense.

4) As an example of HPC density, the city of Qamishli has a population of about two hundred thirty thousand and an HPC contingent of five hundred.

5) Kobane, after the massacre, set out to arm and train HPC volunteers as quickly as possible. Due to the damage of the siege and lack of resources the HPC implementation had lagged behind other priorities. No more. In discussion with my TEV-DEM contact, Mr. Shaif was certain that they would have a full contingent for the city by mid-November of 2015.

As Aram and I sit and chat I ask what he sees as the most important work the HPC will do. He begins slowly, " In Marxism the people were always betrayed by the party, by the army, and what was left was dictatorship, war. In our system the arming of the people, through the YPG, through the Asayîş, through the HPC guarantees that this will not happen. The HPC are one more guarantee for the success of the Revolution. So when we

say protect the people we mean not just against Daesh, but anyone."

I am floored by his statement and say, "You know your history, Durruti, and Bakunin."

He smiles and that was just enough.

The driver is finishing tending to his uncle's graves. Mohammed and I stand by the minivan. I smoke and watch the families as they walk through the cemetery. The driver rises and walks towards us. I want to tell him I'm sorry, express sympathy, say something.

"I hope this never happens again," is all I can manage. He is silent. We climb back in the minivan drive and he kicks over the engine. The three of us look off at the graves of the old, the young, the newlyweds. The minivan then groans onto the 712, and is gone.

(Note: In my drive from Semelka at the border to Amuda all the checkpoints were Asayîş, by my return some week or so later three of the checkpoints were run by men and women wearing the brown vest of the HPC. Perhaps coincidence, perhaps not. My guess is the HPC will have a very important role as the Revolution matures and expands. In one stroke TEV-DEM may have addressed an issue that has plagued anarchist insurrections since the Paris Commune, how to maintain power, in the form of a militia, at the block and neighborhood level. Time will tell…)

Rojava Dispatch Final: Journey Home

Journey Home

"Mr. Errante…did you visit Syria?" The US Border Patrol officer stares at me through the bulletproof plastic that separates us. He shifts in his seat. The man wants an answer.

"Me? Syria? No. No way… too dangerous," I say. Praying the lie doesn't show on my face. I'm in Dublin,

at US Pre-clearance, almost back to the States and now, it seems, I may have some explaining to do.

He scoops up my passport and customs declaration in his right hand and says, "Come this way Mr. Errante. We're going to search your luggage." For the first time, during the entire trip, that sickening feeling of real fear rises inside me.

Two days earlier—Paris. A singular morning, fresh sun and breeze, the kind of daybreak that only the Mother of the Revolutions can serve for breakfast. I walk through Père Lachaise Cemetery my head and shoulders hunched forward. I know this old boneyard like a good friend, and there's one memorial that calls me now. The Mur des Fédérés (the Wall of the Federals). A place on the enclosing wall of the old cemetery where several hundred Communards were taken to be slaughtered by the forces of law and order. The memorial comes into view, a simple plaque on a wall of stone. Nothing more. I pull a YPG flag from my bag and drape it over the memorial. I take a photo. A German man and his daughter walk around the corner. I ask him to take a photo of me and the wall and the flag. As he preps, my hand once again rises, almost unconsciously in the V salute and he snaps a few photos. I am not done. There are two more photos to be taken. One photo with the flag draped over Oscar Wilde's tomb, and one photo at the sculpted bronze cap that seals Nestor Makhno's ashes into the Columbarium. Taking the final picture I notice an odd thing, did the likeness of Makhno smile a bit when I placed the YPG flag? Or is it me?

The Border Patrol officer walks me to a holding room in the Pre-Clearance area. I am told to sit on a row of benches. As I sit I see that I am facing a wall of waist

high one-way mirrors. In the reflection I can see several officers directly behind me looking at my passport and paper work. They talk quietly and nod.

My mind begins to play smuggler's games. I go through all the potential contraband in my bags, numerous YPG/J flags, buttons, and patches. A book called Stateless Democracy, TEV-DEM flags, HPC flags and an HPC emblazoned brown uniform vest including two Velcro pockets that exactly fit a Kalashnikov banana clip for 7.62mm X 39 mm bullets. Additionally, several pro-YPG/J, TEV-DEM magazines in scary Daesh-looking Arabic and latinized Kurmanji. Welp, enough there for a few hours of interrogation, maybe even a day or two of detention. One of the Border Patrol officers calls me to his window. I stand, turn, and walk with measured steps to where he motioned me.

After the stroll through Père Lachaise I hail a taxi and head to the hotel. The taxi driver swerves through the Place de la République on our way back to the Left Bank when it catches my eye. A flag; the yellow/red/green flag of the Kurdish Autonomous Region, then two, and then three of them. Finally I see a huge YPG pennant, yellow with red star, as it lazes and hops in the mid-afternoon swirl. I yell at the taxi driver to stop and pay the fare frantically. I hop into traffic on the Rue du Temple and quickly read the sign over the bandstand, "International March against Daesh, For Kobane, For Humanity." Whooomp, there it is, it's November 1st—International Kobane Day, and one more time, I am enmeshed in the Revolution.

I walk through the crowd, smelling the food, seeing the colors, transported back to Kobane and Cizere by the sound of spoken Kurmanji, and the feeling of re-

birth, of making a new world. There is a tent where representatives of the Halkların Demokratik Partisi (Turkish, HDP) sit, drink tea, and converse. I walk over and introduce myself. I show them some of my photos and posts about Rojava. They speak together, then someone is sent to find a translator fluent in Turkish, French, Kurmanji, and English. After what might be my last glass of Kurdish style tea for a very long time, the translator arrives and we begin to talk about how HDP integrates activities with events in Rojava. As the conversation runs I once again feel it. The openness, the excitement, the lack of fear, the infectious hope in everything these folks do and believe. The. Damned. Hope.

The Border Patrol officer eyeballs me up and down and asks if I have any cigarettes in my bag. I grin and say, "Yup, fifteen packs of Gitanes and Gauloises, can't buy'em in the US anymore, y'know."

A slight smile crosses his face and he asks about money, gold, anything else I might try to be getting across the border. I answer that I have a few Euros, a few dollars—maybe a total of $100 altogether. No gold, no cheese, nada. He tells me to have a seat while they x-ray my bag. I return to my seat. Only one thought crosses my mind now, did the YPG/J use any paint on those flags that might show up on an x-ray? Oh well, what the hell. I'll find out soon enough.

As I leave the rally one last sign catches my eye, white on black, and bold, cutting statements in French—demanding victory for the YPG. Well, it's the folks from the Fédération Anarchiste, come to voice an opinion. I saunter over and introduce myself, they know me a bit, I know them a bit. I am invited back to their infoshop just off the Place de la République. I sit for a while,

tell them what I'd seen in Rojava. They ask questions. I have some answers—not many. I walk around their space, buy a few posters, thank them and leave. Now, a short night's sleep, a long day's flight, and home.

The Border Patrol officer calls me to his window. I am now frustrated and angry and hope I can hold my tongue. He looks me up and down one last time and says," Mr. Errante, you can proceed. Your bags will be put back on the plane. Sorry for any inconvenience."

"No inconvenience at all, really," I respond. And with that final lie I leave Preclearance, feeling very much, sodomized.

At the San Francisco airport I debark the plane and walk slowly toward the bag claim. It's taken me twenty six hours to travel what should have taken thirteen. My back and legs ache and my head feels like a tree is growing in it. As I round the final corner my compañera appears up ahead. She smiles and we walk quickly to each other. I touch her hand, it is cool and warm, it feels like love. We embrace, I smell her hair, and I whisper," I made it."

"Home," is all she replies. The sound of her voice—dusky, low, familiar—tells me the rest.

(My name is El Errante. My name is Paul Z. Simons. Thanks for reading – hope you enjoyed the Dispatches.)

Dispatches from Brazil

Dispatches from Brazil One:
Swimming Pool and Ocean,
Manumission for a New Millennium
3.16.16

(Salvador, State of Bahia, Brazil) I sit and look out from my hotel room at the lurid spectacle of civilization decomposing in front of my eyes. I had some time between presentations about my experiences in Rojava and decided to spend a few days of R & R on the beach in the city of Salvador. The hotel is virtually empty and, save a few inmates on the first and seventh floor and the staff, I seem to be here alone. It's hot and the smell of ocean and city mixing on lazy afternoons seems to reflect the mélange of tropical juices and liquor that define the beverage choices at this hotel.

The hotel has a swimming pool, set off the beach by several hundred yards. A typical quadrangle affair painted light blue, with beach chairs set in mathematic precision around the edge. A flourish of palm, grass and umbrella completes the tableau. Tourists inhabit the scene. Primarily folks from the Brazilian middle and upper middle class, they include a few young families and older couples—either retired or in that state of metamorphosis from gainfully employed to aging obsolescence.

The denizens of the pool lead an amphibious life. Much of their time is spent reclining in beach chairs, reading from either books or pads, and adjusting ill-fitting swim wear. Most are lighter skinned Brazilians, indicating some wealth and enfranchisement into the

dominant culture. Young moms and dads watch their respective broods, occasionally issuing warnings about the depth of the pool, the intensity of the sun, the heat of the concrete, and the constant refrain, voiced in Portuguese, Spanish, and German of "Don't run, you'll slip and fall." The youngsters heed nothing and constantly swim in the deep end, wipe off sunblock, burn their feet on the steaming concrete and race like demons around the pool. The old folks sun like lizards and when they feel the urge move slowly towards the pool, entering the water slowly using a set of concrete stairs. Once in the water they stand around the edges, they wade, their arms moving in graceful semicircles in the crystal chlorinated water. One night I watched as four or five folks stood in a watery circle talking and laughing, very much like a conversation at a party or reception. The social space only slightly skewed as a result of the movement of water and bodies. At one end of the pool, a view can be had of the beach as it stretches off to the north. Usually at least one, sometimes several, swimmers can be seen standing in the north corner of the swimming pool looking off towards the beach and the curling surf. And what they see likely attracts and repels them in the same instant, because in that scene of crashing sand and sea other actors can be viewed, homeless black kids as they play and churn in the restless sea.

I had tried to get to the ocean and beach one afternoon but was informed by the hotel security guys that it wasn't safe. Specifically that the kids who used the beach were from the favela and they might be a problem for hotel guests. Evidently the security folks considered us prey for the predators who swam and lazed on the other side of the hotel's barriers. Truths sometimes

peek out from behind ridiculous situations. This, apparently, is one of those times.

The young people stand in the ocean, talk, laugh, and compete to see who can body surf a wave for the longest time.

Unbound by credit cards, the daily slavery of the wage, the petty aggravations of Capital and nation-state, the black kids play and kick soccer balls on a sun-blanched beach.

Their dark skin indicating a place in Brazilian society far removed from the observers in the pool. Many are likely homeless, or live with families and friends far removed from the bustling downtown of Salvador. Their lack of engagement with the dominant society, however, seems to affect them very little in the present. The sea, salt breeze and sun that grace their world is a million miles away from the cutthroat capitalism that one day will surely rise up and demand their obedience and subjugation. But as it is, in this the moment, they are far freer than the inmates of the hotel's swimming pool. Unbound by credit cards, the daily slavery of the wage, the petty aggravations of Capital and nation-state, the black kids play and kick soccer balls on a sun-blanched beach. While the truly enslaved look on in mixed horror and admiration as the descendents of those in bondage drink in a life that they can never know.

Dispatches from Brazil Two:
The Pot comes to a Boil, Many Demos, and Is there any Right left?

(São Paulo, Brazil) The orange halogen glow of the lamps in the courtyard at the Pontifícia Universidade

Católica (PUC) makes the air seem denser and more humid than it really is. I had been asked by an anarchist group (Nu-Sol) to present on my experiences in Rojava and was about halfway through the evening...

"So the YPG has a 45 day training protocol..." Then a series of deafening, wrenching explosions tore through the courtyard like thunder. I stopped for an instant, regrouped and continued.

"Jeeezus..." I said, "I felt safer in Rojava than in the US; I guess I can add Brazil to that list." As my friend completed the translation of the sentence there was a ripple of laughter and I returned to business.

It was supposed to be easy. A few weeks in Brazil, some presentations, some beach, and then back to the US. And right up to the talk in Salvador that's the way it had gone.

Then on Sunday, March 13th, a friend and I had decided to stroll down to the beach. As we walked we were passed by one or two folks decked out in yellow and green shirts. Then a few more. And a few more. I turned to my friend and asked, "What the fuck?"

"A soccer game maybe. No, a protest against Dilma and the government. That's what this is."

When we turned the corner onto the beach area the entire street was a waving sea of yellow, green and blue, the colors of the Brazilian flag. Many people carried homemade signs denouncing the government and corruption. Sure enough, a protest demanding that Lula, the previous President of Brazil, be sent to jail for corruption and that Dilma, the current President of Brazil, be impeached. We picked our way through the rolling waves of yellow and green shirts, my friend translating the signs and the chants, then whispering the Eng-

lish into my ear. Finally I went into journalist mode and started asking questions. I spoke to two older looking gentlemen who each carried signs denouncing corruption. The men, both in their 70s, were a dentist and a filmmaker respectively. The message from each was exactly the same and simple, Lula is a crook, so is Dilma. They must both leave public life.

The current tale of political upheaval in Brazil is of Byzantine complexity. It includes a centre-left party (The Worker's Party, PT) that was once respected (or feared), and its slow slide into corruption and decay. Recently criminal investigations and judicial proceedings were initiated against Lula for taking kickbacks while running the country's lucrative oil concession, Petrobras. At the same time Dilma, the once popular female President, has had her hands full with charges of bribery in the legislature, payoffs to move legislation forward, and an incoming bill for impeachment that has a better than average chance of approval. Issues of race and class are also prominent as the PT has traditionally been the party of the poor, of black folks, and, as the name implies, of workers. The opposition is made up of electoral parties and large media firms that seek to represent the rich, the finance sector, and they have proven to be social-media savvy and increasingly bold. Finally over the past year, the economic situatiuon in Brazil has become sufficiently grim that the media refer to it as "The Crisis." And to add one last ingredient to this already volatile mix—memories of the decades of dictatorship (1964—1980), the repression and military rule, simmer darkly in the minds of Brasilieros, old and young.

After returning to the hotel I sat and wrote some notes and then it occurred to me—I asked my traveling

companion, "Did you see any black folks in the demonstration?"

She thought a moment and replied, "One or two."

"Yeah, damned few."

On March 18th after my return to São Paulo I attended the next installment of the ongoing political melodrama, a protest by supporters of Lula, Dilma, and the PT. By now the discourse had become more shrill, including a small occupation by anti-Dilma forces of a sidewalk on the Avenida Paulista, the main thoroughfare in that behemoth of urban sprawl. Anti-PT forces were also sporting signs with a hand print that included a missing finger, a clear reference to Lula, who as an auto worker had had his little finger sheared off in an industrial accident. A number of folks I had met had decided to check out the demo and so we went. The Avenida Paulista was the site for this demo and prior to the arrival of the PT faithful the police had cleared out the anti-Dilma occupiers in order to avoid an inevitable collision. My first impression was one of the overwhelming force that the Military Police had assembled to keep the demonstrators in check. As I stepped out of the subway I saw two immense armored vehicles painted in grey and dark blue camouflage, with rocket launchers for tear gas and concussion grenades parked in the center of the Avenida. One of my hosts turned to me, pointed at the vehicles and said, "Those they bought from Israel. They were initially designed for the rioting in Gaza and elsewhere."

Huge crowds again, most dressed in the red of the PT, some communists and socialists, perhaps as many as 100,000 attended the Sao Paulo demo, and there were dozens of other pro-Lula gatherings across the country. As we walked through the crowd my companions saw

a number of other area anarchists, and a group of anarcho-communists waving a huge black and red flag. This prompted me to ask, "Are the anarchists here supporting Dilma and Lula?"

"Yes and no. At this time the issue is not pro- or anti-Dilma, it's a coup. That's why many anarchists are here."

As it turned out that's the reason that a number of other people were also there. I spoke to one gentleman, a salesman, who replied to my question as to why he was at the rally with one word, "1964." The year that the military seized power.

There was a sense of urgency at this demonstration absent at the anti-PT rally, and part of the discourse, present in the signs and speeches, demanded the maintenance of democracy and democratic structures. My final impression was the impressive size of the demo and how different it felt from similar gatherings I had attended in the US. The Brasilieros were certain, clear in their attendance and proud of their views. In the US, there is a certain sense of anxiety and from some participants also shame at events like this. As if having the freedom to speak was sufficient and actually exercising that right was some kind of weakness or insult to their communities.

As I concluded my talk at PUC and packed my laptop into my bag several students entered the courtyard. Speaking rapidly they seemed frightened, unsure. I asked someone to translate and was told that there had been a scuffle between pro- and anti-PT forces. Evidently the students of the faculties of Law, Economics, and Business Administration had rented a large truck with loudspeakers, parked it in front of PUC and commenced to conduct a rally in support of jailing Lula

and impeaching Dilma. This brought out the (mostly) lefty student body who then proceeded to harass and torment their peers. In the final scuffle the left students had demanded to have access to the mic so they could present their case. More pushing on both sides and the truck was driven off. Then the Military Police moved in shooting concussion grenades and tear gas, including firing one tear gas canister into the third floor window of a classroom building.

By the time I had walked out to the street the remaining group of left wing students were listening to impromptu speeches from folks who climbed onto a set of stairs. Most of what was said was less about the actual issues, and addressed more generally fascism, and warned of a possible coup. In the morning a few news feeds had video of the action and one was truly unique. It showed the Business, Law and Economics students denouncing the possibility of a left-wing coup and revolution. They chanted the exact same words that I heard on the Avenida Paulista just a few days earlier, "No to the coup!"

As a final observation, it's incredible how much of the discourse and dialogue of the anti-Lula crowd was grounded in the language of the Left. As if the Brazilian elites, bereft of any real political ideas, had settled on parroting the word "corruption" in place of a real programme. It seemed they were following several steps behind the PT and its allies. I never conjecture. In this instance though it seems that the political tension in Brazilian society is leading to some sort of denouement, a potential collision. The outcome of which, whether played out in the chambers of the judiciary or in the streets, no one can guess.

Dispatch from São Paulo

Ayahuasca, Good Work, and Santo Daime

2/10/18

The man in the white shirt holds out the ceramic cup, I take it and drink. The ayahuasca tea tastes like maple syrup, with some fine grit and an earthy aftertaste. I return to my seat and notice immediately that my lips and tongue have become pleasantly numb. The rest of the ritual participants approach and similarly dose with the brew. The man pours himself a cup, extinguishes the electric light and sits comfortably in his chair. As he settles the flame of a single candle sends shadows dancing and popping around the living room. I burrow into the futon I'm sitting on, waiting for the drug to make its presence known. Finally the man who poured the tea addresses the group in a calm voice, "Bom trabalho" [good work].

Like many anarchists I have tried a host of hallucinogens in a multitude of contexts; LSD while clubbing in NYC in the '80s, peyote in Native American Church ceremonies, mescaline with Chinese food, and MDMA for the mind-blowing sex. So with the move to São Paulo I had hoped that the opportunity to try ayahuasca might happen. And sure enough the therapist I had been seeing recommended, as a treatment, trying a Santo Daime ayahuasca ritual. The coincidence gave me the odd feeling that I didn't find ayahuasca; ayahuasca found me. I jumped at the chance.

(When invited I resolved to experience the ritual as a participant. While I have neither belief nor disbelief in God, I do believe in respecting others' faith. In so doing I reject Anthropology's participant/observer academic

copout. In such a situation you are either a participant or an observer, never both.)

A week later I found myself in the living room of a professional couple in São Paulo, with five other participants. A low altar stood along one wall adorned with flowers, water, cachaça, a plastic bottle of ayahuasca tea, and pictures of Raimundo Irineu Serra (the founder of Santo Daime) and Padrinho Sebastião (Little Father Sebastian—a popularizer of Santo Daime in urban areas). A quick note about the Santo Daime religion—founded in the 1920s by Raimundo Irineu Serra, a rubber tapper in the far western Brazilian state of Acre—the religion is a synthesis of indigenous shamanism, Catholic imagery and African native religions. In this sense it perfectly emulates the syncretic nature of Brazilian society and it is no surprise that urban professionals, mental health providers, agricultural workers and those on spiritual quests are turning more and more to the religion and ayahuasca. What is important in all this is that ayahuasca is considered by practitioners as a healing concoction, it is a medicine for those who suffer mentally, emotionally and spiritually. It illuminates what was darkened by fear, anger, hurt; hence one of its alternate names, Santa Luz, the Saint of Light. It also bears the image of power, of strength—to deal with life, to overcome adversity, to change.

After about twenty minutes of silence, the host turns on the light, a guitar, rattles and hinos (books of chants) are produced and a long session of chanting begins. The chanting is melodic, almost song but not quite. I follow along as best I can. I notice that my Portuguese is beginning to get a whole lot better—the ayahuasca? Maybe. The

room also waxes far brighter, glowing in yellows and light greens, and I notice a moment of physical relaxation, almost being tired—a yawn. Blips of color and light have landed on the page of my hino, and are starting to dance and play at leap-frog over the words. I no longer pay attention to the chanting and it fades into the background and I close my eyes where a universe of hues erupts and boils. I yawn again and let the colors in my head have their fun.

Some notes on the physical effects of ayahuasca. The literature and lore of ayahuasca indicates that the brew produces a more introspective, personal experience. I found this to be true, the tea must contain at least one alkaloid that is a depressant. So as opposed the "wide awake" feeling and extroversion of LSD, peyote, or MDMA, one becomes far quieter physically and mentally. Mescaline (the psychoactive in peyote) and MDMA are both analogues of amphetamine and hence their stimulant effect is a given. There is a body chill noticeable with ayahuasca, even on a warm night in São Paulo I felt sudden shivers on occasion. The following day I noticed that I was feeling quite warm and took my temperature, it was elevated—perhaps the reason for the body chills is a mild febrile effect of the drug. There is an increase in blood pressure with the drug. At first I was a bit concerned with the noticeable tightening in my chest, but it rapidly subsided as the drug entered its visual phase. Ayahuasca is also noted as a purgative—and it is. Several participants vomited as a result of drinking the brew—as I had fasted most of the day I was pretty much in the clear. Though I did have some rather unusual bowel movements over the course of the evening.

Mid-ceremony most participants, including myself, dosed again, usually with only half the initial amount, and then a short ceremony was held for Santa Maria (marijuana). A joint is passed from participant to participant and chants about Santa Maria are voiced. Then once again a return to chanting, singing, and hallucinating. This time I really feel the effect of the drug, and can sense just how close to disassociation (a full psychic break with reality) I am. Ayahuasca is easily the most potent hallucinogen I have ever tried yet its effects are muted due to the short half-life of the drug. The intensity lasts no more than a half hour and then subsides into a pleasant background hum. The room continues to glow slightly and I return to the chanting. I look out under my lids at my companions, some have their eyes closed, some smile beatifically, and one sleeps comfortably on the floor. At last everyone rises, the chanting ends, a few "Our Fathers" and "Hail Marys" are recited, the participants hug each other and inquire about their respective experiences. It was a beautiful moment—I was lucky to be there.

There is a communality to the ritual, water is shared, ayahuasca is shared, and after the ceremony the participants have a meal and talk. Not surprisingly there was an unvoiced political undercurrent to the ceremony I attended. As I walked around the house acclimatizing myself before the ceremony I noticed an antifa and "Refugees Welcome" sticker on the kitchen wall. I queried my host about them and he said that a previous roommate of his had been an anarchist and then asked, "Do you know about anarchism?"

So it goes....

Dispatches from France

Dispatches from France One:
the Forces Behind Events, Autonomism, and Anarchism, and What Time Is It?

My decision to travel to Europe was taken lackadaisically. There had been some indications that nation-states on the Continent were being stressed from a number of different directions. First, the movement of upwards of two million refugees from the Middle East, specifically Syria, through the social-democratic European heartland is challenging the legitimacy of both the economic and security structures of numerous states. It should be noted that the dual nature of the stress, on social redistribution schemes and border integrity, indicates that both ideological left and right are being drawn into the legitimacy maelstrom, and that the moment of the challenge, its core, is situated to call into question not just the nation-state or Capital, rather they illuminate the failure of the entire Western liberal hegemon, the whole enchilada. So, I thought, why not? I feel like traveling and writing and the timing seemed somehow, perfect.

In spite of being detained and interrogated by two Homeland Security investigators at JFK, who proved to be far better informed about my trip to Rojava in October, international speaking tours, and what I had for breakfast (that day) than I thought was possible, I was eventually released and allowed to board my flight, though without the obligatory x-ray examination of my baggage. As I hunkered down into my seat on the first leg of the trip to Moscow via Aeroflot I reflected that it will likely be a long time before I return to the United

States. I will not miss it.

The first two days in Paris were allotted to rest, visiting a few museums, sitting in cafes, and consuming copious (and potentially lethal) amounts of caffeine and baguette. Finally on Sunday I walked through spring fog and drizzle to the Place de la République to see what was happening with Nuit Debout. In the photos I had seen of the first few days of the occupations the Place (a rectangle of about two acres where a number of thoroughfares converge including Rue du Temple, Boulevard Voltaire, and Boulevard Saint-Martin) had been virtually overrun by thousands of people. On the day I visited there were perhaps a few hundred folks, most sheltered under a dozen or so blue tarps that had been set up at random to accommodate various collectives, logistics and publicity coordinating groups, and the occasional alphabet soup Marxist Party propaganda committee. On the afternoon I stopped by most of these tents were being used for presentations on a range of topics. These included DIY carpentry, a Biehl workshop on capitalism, "commune cause," and a mini-assembly which appeared to be more about providing a venue for folks to vent than any specific debate or decision-making. At one tent a small YPG flag was set on a tabletop and as I circled outside I noticed that a smallish middle-aged woman was speaking and that questions would be translated for her and her responses were being translated for the listeners. I finally got a view of this presenter—and was not surprised to see that it was Janet Biehl, Murray Bookchin's companion. I continued walking around for an hour or so, would stop and listen to a presenter and then move on.

Finally, tired of the mist and rain, I made my way

to the Fédération Anarchiste (FA) infoshop just off of République. It was, as usual, busy. The FA, a synthesist working class confederation, is one of the more stable anarchist organizations in France. Meaning that while the FA is an excellent point of contact for folks traveling in Europe, it also makes of the FA one of the targets for bullshit sectarian attacks. A sectarianism that in many ways exceeds the petty sniping, character assassination and trolling that the North American anarchist community once reveled in, but now appears to be putting aside.

One of the anarchists, Lou, that I had met on my way home from Rojava was there and he and I settled into the back of the infoshop and talked a little about the renewed social contestation in France. First off, he said, no one saw this coming. The French anarchist community had pretty much given up hope on any significant social contestation for decades to come. The proposal of the Loi du Travail and its effective unleashing of employers to hire, fire and discipline, essentially at will, was less an attempt to revivify the French economy than it was a direct challenge to workers and their protection under law. The large reformist trade unions, like the CGT, missed their cue completely, and the attendant riots were essentially the coming together of three distinct groups, high school students, anarchists, and autonomists. The first two are pretty obvious, but the autonomists are a new quantity (for us) and require some discussion. This amorphous group first formed around the journal *Tiqqun* and the subsequent Invisible Committee. The autonomists then, like the nihilist communists, reject any descriptions of the society that they envision bringing into being. In many ways the autonomists are the logical extension of the Situationist Inter-

national and while Marx isn't mentioned in as explicit a fashion as the SI claimed him as their own, their use of the dialectic, and some aspects of Marxist teleology is apparent. This has not diminished their militancy, and they have refined street contestation and tactics into a virtual art. They have also sought to organize those sectors of society largely ignored by both unionists and anarchists, including high school students. They have also proven themselves to be savvy about the placement of their ideas within mainstream media outlets. This has had the effect of placing their critique within the larger framework of French political discourse, regardless of how radical it appears. It has also placed them beyond the narrow confines of the emergency laws instituted after the Charlie Hebdo attack and the ISIL bombing campaign. As an example the prosecution of the Tarnac 9 (the same group of folks who wrote *The Coming Insurrection*) never occurred, and probably never will. The acceptance (or at least acknowledgement) of the ideas of the autonomists among mainstream academics and theorists has removed them from the category of social villain that the anarchists and jihadis now inhabit almost exclusively. The formation and growth of autonomist organizations has also been rapid, and they have been fiercely competitive for members with larger, more established organizations. As an example the French student union UNEF has had its membership raided by the autonomist high school organization MILI.

Finally, the autonomists are clear in distancing themselves from anarchism and the anarchists—in spite of some theoretical confluence, especially their critique of the dominant society and their understanding of insurrection, which resembles some historical anarchist

critiques (Stirner) and to a lesser degree recent anti-civilization theory.

The autonomists, the anarchists, and the high school students responded decisively to the proposed Loi du Travail, staging a number of ad hoc demonstrations. In the end, however, the filming of a student being beaten by the police galvanized the protestors and finally brought the unions, and everyone else, into the fray. Tensions have risen dramatically since then, the legislation itself became law when the Chamber of Deputies employed a little used legal caveat that ended debate and allowed the legislative cowards to vote by not voting. Demonstrations have been ongoing, and Lou invited me to the next big manif, on Thursday, May 26th. I jumped at the chance and we made plans to meet prior to the march.

(In the ensuing three days between meeting Lou and the manif the reformist union CGT struck at all eight oil refineries in France, and also attempted to block entry to several of the nation's nuclear power plants. Supplies of oil and gas have begun to dwindle, and as the CGT is the primary union for most of the transportation sector, their ability to pressure both the government and corporations into repealing the legislation will increase algorithmically.)

The next few weeks may prove decisive not only for the Loi du Travail, but for significant sectors of the economy, the political classes, and the population generally. The stress that the Syrian refugees are bringing to bear on European society seems to be matched, if not exceeded by, economic stagnation, emerging political authoritarianism, and what appears to be a restive, increasingly alienated citizenry. So the timing of the European trip

was not bad. And timing, as we all know, is everything

Dispatches from France Two:

Manifestación 5/27/16, Who's on First, Losing a Friend in a Riot, and Black Bloc Logistics

(Paris, Ile de France, 28/05/16) The scene is becoming clearer and it doesn't look good. On one side of the street a line of CRS (Compagnies Républicaines de Sécurité) stands in a wall, unmoving, silent, ready. And opposite them by about 100 meters is another solid row of CRS, hard rubber matraques held ready. I look down at Loni, whose view is obscured by the mob, and tell her to get ready, they may use gas. She and I both fish around in our backpacks for the red and black handkerchiefs that the Federation Anarchiste (FA) folks had given us. Movement is impossible in the crush, and I find myself less worried about being pummeled about the head and shoulders by CRS goons than the likelihood of being smothered or trampled should the crowd move or run suddenly. Two or three dull explosive thuds resound in the sunshine and a cloud of teargas, wafted by a slight breeze, moves ghostlike over the crowd. The sound of choking erupts immediately as the protestors begin to move away from grayish blue gas…

Earlier—I am walking with Leon, Loni, and a bunch of folks we had met at the FA infoshop prior to the demonstration. As we walk I notice that we are headed to the front of the march, and that most of the anarchists and autonomists including the black bloc are positioning themselves there. I ask, "Are you always at the front of the march?"

"No," Leon responds, "but with the way things are,

we take the front and the unions let us. They don't like diversity of tactics, but in this case they recognize that we are having an impact. Before this we were barely tolerated, now we lead." And so it was. The manifestacións (manifs) sparked by the Loi du Travail have had a fundamental impact on street-based social contestation in France. The unions failed to respond quickly to the legislation, and initially tried to distance themselves from the autonomist and anarchist challenge. In the ensuing days of confrontation and riot someone, somewhere decided that the unions had better support what the radicals had started—and so the placement of the black bloc (and others) at the head of the march had become, for now at least, standard.

The march was huge, the unions put the number at 50,000, though the initial police estimate was 19,000. The largest reformist union—the CGT—its flags, posters, vehicles and t-shirts were everywhere. Stark, working-class reds glowed in the early afternoon shade. Other unions, professional organizations, and left political parties were out as well—the Force Ouvrier, French Communist Party, Trotskyite groupuscules, etc. As we waited for the march to begin I had time to ask Leon some more questions...

"So what is the bottom-line? What do the unions want out of all this?"

"The ideal would be for the law to be repealed, not amended, not have the debate restarted. Just, deleted."

"And what is the likelihood of that? Has anything like this ever happened before?"

"It's possible. Some unpopular legislation has been dropped at the last minute, but this is already law. To retract it now would be committing political suicide. Es-

pecially as it comes from a Socialist administration."

"I still can't believe that we're at the front of the march."

"Well, it's still about control. CGT has a whole squad of security that march right behind us. If the cops really attacked the anarchists or autonomists, I think the union security squads would back us up."

The march began to move slowly; the FA folks handed out copies of their new magazine and pasted up circle-A stamps on lamp posts and bus shelters as we walked along. A few "characters" moved through the crowd, one dressed as a clown seemed pretty well known and he would stop and talk to various libertarian groups. As we strolled down the Rue Diderot several explosions sounded up ahead—the black bloc had managed to lay hands on some impressive fireworks, likely M-60s or M-80s and were evidently tossing a few in the direction of CRS lines established to prevent people from splitting off from the main march.

The march then took an odd turn onto Rue Chaligny—we advanced perhaps fifty meters and then in an instant the people at the front of the march stopped, turned and began walking fast towards the back. Their faces immediately told the story—a line of CRS blocking the road up ahead. It's a trap. Loni and I turned just in time to watch another row of CRS draw up, effectively blocking the street on both ends. She grabbed my hand and pulled me up onto the sidewalk, but that didn't help matters, it was more crowded than the street and the cops had it blocked as well. I kept wondering what the hell do they want? They've blocked off the street, we're trapped like rats—usually when cops pull this kind of shit they at least leave an outlet some-

where. The people around us began to mask up against the gas, and Loni and I did the same; then the thud of canisters being launched and the (almost beautiful) dispersion of teargas from multiple containers. I had never seen it this close before and just before my eyes began streaming tears I recall thinking, Wow, it's like Fourth of July fireworks.

The crowd around us surged and I could feel Loni's small hand slip from mine, and by the time I turned around she was gone—lost in the crowd, gas, and fear. The CRS then backed off from the Rue Diderot side and allowed the crowd to return to the main thoroughfare. I met Leon and the rest of the anarchists under their red and black flag. They had brought water ampoules and after dousing my eyes and face my vision finally blurred back into sight. Evidently Loni had made it out safe, but had left the manif and was likely headed back to her hotel. I, on the other hand, wanted to see how it ended.

As I walked ahead of the FA group a commotion on my right caught my attention, it was the black bloc attacking the storefront of a Škoda dealership. The assault was spirited but the windows were proving to be pretty tough to get through. In fact with between 5 and 10 folks working on it took ten minutes to reduce the plate glass to whitish sand. As I watched the progress two things struck me, first there was a significant amount of communication between the attackers and folks standing next to me. This interaction took the form of both hand signals and yelling. Also the folks standing next to me were conspicuous in that one held a small red flag stapled to a dowel and the other occasionally held aloft a book that I recognized immediately, *The Coming Insurrection*. I also noted that they were

constantly looking up and down the street, possibly for police, or more likely for warnings from other lookouts who were placed further away from the action, so as to increase the likelihood of escape if the cops intervened. Which they didn't. I also noted the complete support of the crowd. As the glass began to give way applause and shouts of encouragement came from all sides. I reflected back on demos in the US where spray painting a Nike store would always draw some liberal out of the crowd to castigate the destruction of property—or the time honored refrain supporting cops—"Well, they are workers too." Anyway as I observed the black bloc folks, they started to take an interest in me, or rather my t-shirt, which depicted two nihilists in Italy knee-capping a nuclear power executive as they rode by on a motorbike. Rydra had given me the shirt at the East Bay Anarchist Book Fair, and the members of the black bloc obviously recognized the scene and after giving me (or the shirt) a thumbs up, they indicated I should follow them. Which I did.

Which is how during the last part of the march I was swept up into the black bloc and got the chance to observe their tactics more closely.

Which, when you see them on videos, appear utterly random and based on happenstance, opportunity—and to a certain extent they are. Yet there is also some sophisticated surveillance happening and, to the extent allowed by circumstance, security and coordination. The two spotters, distinguishable either by the red flag or the book held aloft, stayed well apart from the action, and each other. Some targets were obviously chosen by virtue of their being in the path of destruction, like the various bus shelters, advertising kiosks, and ATMs I watched

being vandalized. The hand signals used were simple, non-military, expressive. The okay signal, indicated that it was time to move on, damage done. A hand wave towards the action brought more folks into the fray, and a hand wave away moved people out of the area. The various implements of destruction, paint balls, heavy objects resembling bricks for throwing through glass, firecrackers, and flares were kept by folks who stayed far away from the action—when needed they were called for. We finally reached the Place de la Nation, and the black bloc faded into the crowd—hoodies were placed into backpacks, shoes were changed, and they walked off in groups of twos and threes looking like normal Parisian high school kids out on a spring weekend. And not the angry, uncompromising insurrectionary that lurked just beneath the surface of each one.

The FA group arrived at the Place some ten or fifteen minutes after I did, we spoke for a moment or two. I thanked them for inviting me and we made plans to meet and talk the next day. I walked the long way home to the hotel in Montmartre. I was tired, my eyes stung, and I couldn't shake the creepy feeling that the demo, the violence, the riot were still going on—somewhere. And that very soon I would once again be looking down a row of CRS goons, waiting for a teargas canister to blossom at my feet.

Dispatches from France Three:
Nantes Manifestación 6/2/16,
A Fateful Resonance, Lines of Graffiti
"Dans la rue avec la CGT on fout le zbeul"
("In the streets with the CGT fucking things up")

Graffiti 06/02/16 Nantes

Nantes, Pays de la Loire. Another day. Another manif against the Loi du Travail. This time, Nantes. I had wanted to see Nantes; it is near the ZAD and had been the scene of some of the more furious riots over the past months. Some of the video of the action shows the torching of a Porsche, black bloc versus CRS clubfests, and the arrest of dozens of protestors. Indeed, of those protestors held on house arrest as of 06/02/16 nationwide, the vast majority were residents from the area in and around Nantes. There are a number of reasons for this, the city saw a unique upswing in student revolutionary activity in the late sixties of sufficient size to warrant a trip to the city by Vaneigem to see what, in fact, was happening. The Nantes unions had declared for a Commune which lasted from 23 May to 12 June 1968 during this time the town hall was occupied by a joint strike committee of workers and peasants. This insurrectionary activity has continued to the present and the resonance between the ZAD, and the nearest large city, Nantes, is clear.

I arrived in Nantes on the Sunday prior to the event and had been told about the progress of the planning for the manif. It was pointed out to me that the folks involved in logistics had a very hard in time in Nantes estimating how many folks will attend any given demo. As an example at one of the pro-ZAD manifs in 2013, the expected five thousand attendees was vastly underestimated, and most observers put the final census at a whopping twenty thousand protestors. Planning therefore, and flexibility, are important. The date was set for June second at 10am, all the unions would attend, as would other inter-

ested parties—and basically any radical anywhere close to Nantes, who heard the call-out, marked their calendar. I went to the demo with a number of local anarchists and a member of the Federation Anarchiste from Paris. The turn out proved to be less than huge, perhaps two to three thousand—tops. Yet there was a significant number of black bloc folks there, and also a good turnout of the local anarchist community. Who were missing were the police, CRS, and the assorted forces of law and disorder. They were nowhere to be seen, which I counted as odd. The march began with the union folks starting off followed by the black bloc and radicals who quickly moved to the front. The first turn was to lead to the local prefecture, essentially the executive of the large county-like structures that functions as a middling level in the hyper-centralized French state, and the police prefecture, no explanation needed and finally into the heart of Nantes. We were supposed to walk across a bridge that spans the Erdre river, a small tributary of the Loire, but it was blocked by hordes of cops, riot vehicles, all standing behind an impressive mesh steel fence reaching to the bridges upper structure. The black bloc went to work throwing bottles filled with paint and some irregular objects. But with the steel fence blocking projectiles there was little that the black bloc could do so the tactical decision to continue and ignore this first technical victory by the police was taken. By now the unions, led by the reformist CGT, had passed around the black bloc and continued to march to—God knows where. The stated goals of the march, the prefecture, the prefecture of police, the town hall and the train station now seemed out of reach. Undeterred the black bloc regrouped, a graffiti bombardment began (more on this later), and quickly

sought to regain the lead position in the march. I stood in the back and watched as a virtual horde of black clad warriors moved quickly past the unionists by sticking to the sidewalk. It looked like a march of black ants climbing a non-descript multi-colored tree or wall. As they attained the front there was a brief halt as CGT marshals tried to get the black to bloc to turn around. They said if they tried to move into the town center, which was the general direction they were headed, that they would all get their asses kicked. The black bloc was not impressed and after some debate and a moment's hesitation moved off. As I walked in the black bloc the FA comrade beside me looked back and said, "Good, the CGT is following."

One thing the black bloc had brought to the march was new to me, a sound system, a good, loud, fucking sound system. Which they used to blast alternating dubstep, détourned revolutionary songs, French classics and pop. As we marched we saw a number of cops running in our direction from a side street, as they did the sound system blasted the last minute or so of MIA's Paper Planes, which includes the chorus of, "All I want to do is (four loud gunshots) and take your money." The song stopped the bloc and most turned and faced the advancing police as they mimed the gunshots by pointing their fingers at the cops and imitating the motion of firing a pistol and then loudly sang the final line. The faces of the police as a few hundred finger pistols shot at them was classic; a mix of horror, anger, and something else...fear maybe, or vengeance. The song ended, and the march continued. It was pure political street theater, and a scene I'll likely not forget.

We moved past the town hall, an ugly office like affair, which suffered greatly in smashed windows and

loads of graffiti. Moving past the building brought the black bloc into a small open square, which revealed a line of CRS facing their right flank. Barely had I made the open square when the sound of dull thuds sounded and multiple canisters of CS gas poured down on us. The handkerchief came out and I wrapped it around my face. There was little to do but move fast past the spreading shadow of the teargas. The black bloc decided not to stand and fight in the tight streets and moved quickly down and onto the central plaza, and the final destination—the train station.

There was an impromptu march by the assorted radicals after the termination of the original march. We followed this march for about a mile. It was gassed twice and the CRS finally moved in to disperse it along with the most fearsome element of French law enforcement, the BAC (Brigade Anti-Criminalité). The BAC are units of physically fit lunatics whose job is to move in and arrest demonstrators, when there are no manifs to harass, they turn on drug dealers—and in Marseilles at least, steal their drugs and sell them or use them. The Marseilles BAC was fired to a man in a massive vandalismcorruption case that included drug seizure, sales, intimidation, etc. In the black bloc the BAC are loathed and everyone seems to have their own favorite BAC story of abuse and degradation. The folks I attended the manif with decided that the march was ending and so we moved off. At the same moment there was a sound of tear gas being fired and the entire remnant of the demonstrators turned the corner that we had left them at, and came running straight for us. As it happened the FA comrade smiled and said, "The hardest thing is leaving a manif. Sometimes it follows you...."

The next day I retraced the route of the march to get some photos of the graffiti that had gone up. It varied greatly, alternately ironic, chiding, demanding, and funny. It's only common characteristic was a knife-edge of provocation and subversion. I include some of the standouts with translations and explanations where necessary.

Dans la rue avec la CGT on fout le zbeul
In the streets with the CGT fucking things up
[A double meaning. 1) The black bloc chiding the CGT as reformist and pacific and 2) An invitation to the CGT to join the bloc to make things better. Note the extreme slang of "fucking things up"

2017: les urnes en miettes
2017: ballot boxes in pieces
(2017 is the next national election in France)

Nik la BAC
Fuck the BAC

l'action est le soeur du reve
action is the sister of dream

Le Rage et le swag
The Rage and the swagger

l'emuete embellit ma ville – Johanna Rolland
riot embellishes my city – Johanna Rolland
(Rolland is the mayor of Nantes)

Nantes, l'emeute au naturel
Nantes, all natural (organic?)

L'imagination a pourvoir

The imagination fulfilled
(a twist on the May '68 Situationist slogan,
"All Power to the Imagination")

Vive le Vandalisme
Long Live Vandalism
(in the original, Vandalism
is misspelled… deliberately?)

Dispatches from Greece

Dispatches from Greece One:

Vox, and Crossing the Rubicon

12.3.16

(All material in this dispatch was approved for release by the relevant parties)

"We were in an Assembly at the Polytechnic discussing solidarity with political prisoners, and many were interested in helping with money and support. No one had any money so we squatted Vox and made it into a café to make money."

I am sitting in the Vox cafe with Tharasis, an anarchist associated with the space and the action group Rubicon. The space is huge by my standards, airy, with massive windows that open out onto Exarcheai Square, multiple tables and chairs, a small bar with an espresso machine, and a fridge stuffed with beer standing to one side. A small library is also present. Tharasis continues, "So far we have made 160,000 euro to help the prisoners."

"That's a lot…" I mutter.

"Not really, we pay no rent, no electricity, nothing. It helps, though, prisoners in Greece get nothing. They have to buy everything, toilet paper, toothpaste, everything," he says as he lights another cigarette.

"Mostly anarchists, nihilists, some others, we make sure that the activities they were imprisoned for were political, and that in prison they have shown solidarity. That's it. We don't have a test to see if they meet our standards."

Vox also houses a small medical and dental clinic in the basement, an initiative that came from outside the

Vox collective but was considered important enough to support. The space also hosts other assemblies and groups.

"And then Rubicon..." I ask.

"Well Rubicon is different, out of the people who squatted Vox and whose primary concern was solidarity with political prisoners, a new concern arose. Many of us saw the movement begin to lose motion, to freeze."

"Like how? What gave you that impression?"

"Fewer people at demos and assemblies, less interest."

"Okay so you formed Rubicon...."

"Yes, Rubicon. A smaller group for direct action. We formed it to keep the light on, to show the state and our comrades that anarchy still lives."

"And the targets of your actions...."

"All planned, we look for targets that will affect people, that are socially relevant. Like Le Pen's party renting a space in Athens, or the agency responsible for privatization. And we let people know who we are, what we want, and how to contact us." It should also be noted that Rubicon, in an action at the Greek parliament protesting prison conditions, found themselves in the uncomfortable position of finding a door into the building open and unguarded. A quick consensus was reached that maybe it wasn't the best day to seize and destroy the state.

We also watched the video of the Le Pen offices being ransacked and he commented, laughing, "Did you see? The comrade with the hammer is using the wrong side of the head! It's terrible."

"What about security?"

"The people who participate are masked, and without identity the state can do little. I was arrested but the

charges were dropped—the video shows masked people—not us."

"And how many people usually participate?"

"That all depends on the action. Some require only one or two. Others, dozens. When we attacked the state agency for privatization it took many people. It's a big building and we needed time to destroy all the office computers. Others, like the parliament action, maybe 10 or 15."

"And," I ask, "what of now…?"

"What's happening now is critical, what we do as Rubicon seeks to reignite the anarchist movement."

Dispatches from Greece Two

The Exarcheia Commune Rises and Defends Itself, a Review of the Battle

Ons Danse le Lachrymo… ("We Dance the Teargas")
Graffiti, France, July 2016

"Comrade, will you watch these while I throw one?" He is tall, masked from head to toe in black, and is known to me. As he speaks he motions to a milk crate stuffed with Molotovs.

"Sure…go ahead," I say as I light a cigarette and settle in to guard the precious weapons stash while he tosses the thing at the Social Enemy. Ten minutes later he returns and in spite of the dark night, his black clothing, and the shadow we stand in, he glows with happiness—like the Molotov he just launched, he is alight.

Strategy

The strategy was simple, and for the anarchists new, defend the beating anarchist heart of Athens, of Greece, perhaps the world. Block, stop and turn back any and all attempts by the Athens Police to get to Exarcheia Square. And do so in a coordinated fashion between all the various groups, teams and squats. Each entity taking responsibility for one or two streets—ensuring they are effectively blocked. This in contrast to previous years when the rioting was scattered, unfocussed and usually developed into clashes around the Polytechnic, the University complex set off several blocks from the Square. This year, the Polytechnic and its environs played no role whatsoever, but Exarcheia Square sure as hell did. Finally, in crystalline form, the strategy was to take and keep liberated territory, to free a community—if only for a few hours.

The strategic plan included blocking all the approaches to the Square and by establishing a secondary system of barricades to neutralize the unfortunately offset side streets that link the main avenues. The side streets were one of the real dangers of the plan, because should the Police actually have the ability to turn a barricade they would then have flanking access to at least one, perhaps several, adjacent streets and barricades. The barricade that my team was tasked with defending was located such that the side street would have given the cops the advantage of flanking us effectively from the side and rear. Not good. In order to counter this threat a series of smaller side barricades were set up on these side streets, effectively slowing any belligerent force from going on a free ride from one street to the next, one point of defense to the next. Two small pedestrian streets also lead into the Square and these were barricaded as well. Finally there was a hope that at one

or two points the anarchists could push hard enough to move the fighting up the street effectively expanding their territory and maybe even be able to sever a police line of reinforcement, or even better, retreat.

The one huge downside to the system of barricades was simple—if one or several were turned it would have given to the police the ability to flank every remaining barricade from the rear. A rock and a hard place scenario. Everyone seemed aware of this, and as fighting was heard in other streets I saw more than one rioter glance nervously over their shoulder in anticipation of a police charge from the rear. Fortunately this never happened.

Tactics

The primary tactical component on the anarchist side was the barricade—construction, defense, and use as a weapon. The Exarcheia barricade varied from street to street. Usually low, sometimes waist high, on occasion higher, but never above eye-level so that the fighters could see over and anticipate police charges. Most included tires, wood taken from construction sites, large planters from the sidewalks, anything that could be ripped out of the ground, torn off a wall, or broken was used to raise the barricade just one inch taller. In one case two steel police barricades had been used to block a side street. In many instances barricades caught fire, either deliberately set or by accident. Once alight, the fires were allowed burn unchecked. The actual battle tactic was to taunt, harass and generally disrespect the forces of authority in a vocal and physical fashion. This included standing in front of the barricade throwing stones at the cops in the hopes of pushing them off their adjacent corner. Occasional chants could be heard rising up from

various barricades, the only one I recognized being a chant calling cops murderers. The cops would charge and be driven off by Molotov and stone barrages. In one case the barricade I was at was turned by the cops, but only for a moment. A swift counter charge by anarchists pushed them off the barricade and back down the street. It's fun to watch a cop retreat, especially as the ground around them sputters and roars in flame and smoke.

In terms of cop tactics they are hard to guess. But it seemed a pattern of varied harassment and probing. They seemed to move personnel from one barricade to another over the course of the night. The barricade I was at was very active with three or four charges an hour, usually beginning with a barrage of flash bang grenades followed by teargas, loads of teargas; then a charge, and a retreat. I saw this tactic deployed over and over, on almost every street. Some streets, hotly contested early in the evening, were virtually empty an hour or two later. Other streets, like mine, felt the brunt of the fighting. There was one barricade situated on a downhill street, in other words allowing some tactical advantage to the cops on a charge, which while contested, it was not a main point of fighting. I kept thinking that the reason must be that the retreat was hampered by the sloped street. Finally, the weather helped the insurgents– it was a humid, rainy cool night. The two pedestrian walkways, swathed in tiles that get slick as shit when wet, went effectively uncontested. The cops realizing that short of wearing shoes with soles slathered in krazy glue there was no way to safely run and retreat on a surface that was, in effect, as treacherous as ice. Almost all insurgent forces like inclement weather to fight in especially against regular troops, once Spe-

cial Forces guys told me that rain and 45-55 degrees Fahrenheit is sufficiently gloomy for regular soldiers to begin to lose heart. In his words, "It tears the morale out of you." Athens on the evening of December 6, 2016 was misty/ slight drizzle, with a temperature hovering at 50 degrees. Perfect.

Weapons

The Exarcheia Molotov is a brilliant technical innovation of the weapon, and worth taking note of. In general they use 500 ml beer bottles, filled half way or a bit less with a flammable liquid, usually gas. They then take a length of gauze bandage and extend a portion into the gas and tape the remainder at the opening of the bottle for a fuse. The traditional dangling fuse being a relic of the past. This accomplishes two things, first as the bottle is only filled half way, the gauze wicks gas and inundates the remaining air in the bottle with gas fumes. Turning the Exarcheia Molotov from a simple device that delivers fire into—a bomb. The damn things actually explode in massive purplish red flame as the remaining liquid gas erupts and spreads fire to anything it touches. Next the taping of the wick at the opening of the bottle, again inundated with liquid gas makes a perfect "fuse" it can be easily lit and thrown without the danger of self-immolation by a flopping, flaming piece of cloth. I would very much like to meet and congratulate the folks who developed this thing. It's brilliant, it's easy, and the Athens Police hate them like the plague—with good reason. The Exarcheia Molotov is a fearsome and effective weapon. Some comrades have further advanced this innovation with an attached canister, which explodes on impact. I have no idea what's in this canister and asked one of the guys who was

throwing these infernal devices what made them work, but as he spoke no English, and as I speak no Greek it remains a mystery. The explosion is loud, like a flash bang, with the attendant dispersal of flaming gasoline to the surrounding area. More information later, perhaps.

Hand thrown chunks of whatever. The most desperate thing I saw in Exarcheia that night was insurgents scrambling to get their hands on stuff to throw. One scene that I'll always remember was of a bunch of young people kicking a pylon cemented in the sidewalk to loosen it. They eventually succeeded and it had the added benefit of producing further hunks of concrete when it was finally hauled out. Tiles torn out of walls, empty bottles, anything not actually nailed down was loosened, ripped out and thrown at the police.

In addition I saw slingshots, and an actual, honest-to-God, David-slays-Goliath sling being used. The projectiles used included ball-bearings, marbles, and stone or concrete chunks. These were clearly weapons of harassment, used during lulls to further infuriate and demoralize the police.

Finally, though linked to a cop weapon, the anarchists have found the use of gas masks absolutely essential. There was little breeze on the night of December 6th and even small amounts of teargas were devastating as it settled into corners, doorways and hung in the damp, unmoving air.

On the cop side little was new, the usual suspects. Flash bang grenades, though in Athens these don't use launchers, they are hand thrown. What is devastating in their repertoire is teargas, Brazilian teargas. Having been gassed recently in France, I'm beginning to be something of a lachrymator connoisseur, and I can tell

you that Greek gas is dense, acrid and acidic—far more so than the Gallic variant. In terms of first aid there is Riopan. A kind of Maalox, but in handy single serving foil packets. The ground around the various barricades was littered with these white foil packs. And the faces of many insurgents looked clown-like as they poured the white liquid liberally into eyes, onto the mucous membranes, and finally taking a swallow to clear the acidic, noxious gas residue out of the throat.

Order of Battle

Anarchists: 800-1,000. Organized as teams of between 5 and 10 fighters. Those from Exarcheia were assigned to various barricades and maintained themselves within their area. Those from outside Exarcheia roamed, the sound of flash bang grenades drawing them to specific streets, militants would frantically move from barricade to barricade as cop charges changed location and intensity. In a lull most hung out in Exarcheia, drank beer, talked, and scrounged for more stuff to throw. The number dwindled over the night to perhaps two hundred when the militants finally dumped arms and hostilities ceased, about 11 pm.

Cops: 200-300 (a guess). Based on my observations of the number per charge (20 cops maximum) and the number of barricades being simultaneously probed and harassed—upwards of five, and the number of police needed to provide logistics, support, command, reserves, and to steer traffic well out of the area.

Snapshots

As I sit and write this on the Isle of Lesvos a short 24 hours after the battle a number of scenes come to mind.

Sitting in a room discussing preparations for the night, many of the militants standing, pacing, nervous with energy to get started. As I guarded the Molotovs having some Italian comrades wander by. They asked for a Molotov, which I provided and we all agreed that the Greeks had done something very right. Helping a young woman overcome by gas, who, when the Riopan got into her eyes and nose immediately recovered. Like a stoned person suddenly sober—she straightened, said, "Thank you Comrade," turned and headed back to the barricade she was attending to. The sight of burning barricades, great arcs of Molotovs fuses sputtering as they flew and struck home in the ranks of the police. The shouting, chanting, laughing, talking–the feeling of really finally being alive. One's hair standing on end as the flash bangs explode and teargas projectiles clatter on the ground and cloud the street. Finally on my way back to the apartment I was staying at, I noticed a small store open, with several people playing cards at a table in the back. I knocked on the door—needed smokes and something to drink. They motioned me in, and asked where I was from, a few questions and finally one of the older men asked, "So tonight did you see the riots?"

"Yes," I answered not wanting to give too much away.

"And who are you with, the young people or the cops?"

Hesitantly I said, "The young people, always."

He smiled broadly and answered, "So are we."

Dispatches from Greece Three

Notes from Two Months in Exarcheia

"Come and get food, Motherfuckers!"

The call, in a slight accent, echoes down the marble steps of the squat—the daily common meal is ready. In many ways this call for food encapsulates the nature of squatting in Greece. There is a complex relationship between squatters, a familiarity born of a shared life and a shared enemy. There is also a challenge, and slight but perceptible pressure to maintain relentless social contestation, always working, pushing towards the Idea. The results can take multiple forms, actions, demos, art, theater. A number of the squatters use art as a weapon. They paint, they build installations, they alter and manipulate the urban environment—joyfully. They plot, they plan actions, they look for openings in the armor of the Social Enemy to strike and cause harm. They speak of love and hatred, with no embarrassment. There is camaraderie, days spent talking, laughing, shadow-boxing, spray-painting or wheat-pasting on the walls of the squat. One of my most profound memories is hearing laughter ringing through the building as the younger squatters horse around late at night. Finally there is a fierce and abiding loyalty—made of living, working, fighting together. I knew, once accepted into the squat, that whatever happened no one there would ever deliberately let harm come to me, and my Comrades knew that I was committed to them in the same manner. This, of all things, proves the worth of living in common, in Commune. Physical, emotional, spiritual safety in the world is a joke perpetrated directly by the Social Enemy—how much better do anarchists do it! Face to face, the commitment becomes real—a material thing, not

some nightmare uniformed asshole threatening prison, parole and degradation. I'll take the threat of several black clad figures in the middle of night acting on conscience to help a Comrade over a cop loaded with laws and punishments. Some of the squatters are guests, visiting from almost every point on Earth, though during my time—primarily Europe, France, Spain, Italy, Germany, and the USA. Others are long-term, mostly Greek, and the occasional American.

Almost everyone takes turns prepping food, and sitting an early morning defense shift, the only two real "chores" at the squat. Everything else is pretty much left to chance, cleaning the toilets, sweeping and mopping common areas, emptying ashtrays, occasionally standing outside on the street when things in Exarcheia get tense, and making tea or sweets for the Assembly. This arrangement overburdens some folks, and it underburdens others, which is the nature of non-coercive social relations. Something to be accepted, not denied, nor decried. It's the way things are.

The squat I found myself in is considered one of the "blackest," meaning that most of the explicitly political squatters are either anarchist individualists or nihilists. Other squats tend to be less black, more red—meaning anarcho-communist, syndicalist or some stripe of collectivist. Some of the finer points of theory are abandoned in favor of the nature of the relationships that the different squats and squatters have developed over the years. Perhaps an overstatement, but a balance of animosity and agreement reigns between the squats. Sometimes forming alliances, occasionally coming to blows. Which is one reason that the December 6th 2016 riot was so significant—where personal and political grudges were

shelved in favor of an all-out coordinated effort at defending the community from police incursion. Even the authorities registered surprise in the main stream media after the night of rioting, going so far as to authorize a few patrols near Exarcheia Square by cops in armored jeeps. This presence was quickly curtailed, the authorities realizing that the provocation was hardly worth the potential backlash. In fact only one squat bowed out from the defense of Exarcheia—and it came under criticism for what was seen as a real inability to play well with others.

"Motherfuckers! I said food!"

The reminder, this time registered with some anger by the cook, is greeted with muted derision and groaning by the residents. It's early by squatter's time—1pm—and those left in the building are sleeping. I drag myself out of bed, force down a coffee and make a plate of food. It's good—potatoes, rice, salad and some kind of fried meat. Could be seafood—eel maybe.

I talked to the cook later that day and asked about the meat, she said," Sheep cheeks and tongue...good right?"

I smiled and said," Really good, thanks."

Like the meal, living in commune is like that. The more you try new stuff, the better it gets.

et cetera

Illegalist Praxis

Notes on a Decade of Crime

1.3.18

(I am, on occasion, asked about my time in with the worlds of the lawless. And while reticent to discuss any current activities that might be construed, by anyone, as being illegal; I realize that as regards my earlier shenanigans, the statute of limitations is in my corner. Before I begin, a disclaimer or two, first I never knowingly physically harmed anyone. Material harm? Property harm? Different story. Second, most of my criminal activities were driven by survival, in some cases by desperation – the need to eat, to obtain shelter, to keep a needle in my arm. It was only later that I realized the political ramifications of these actions; their moment as a rejection of nation-state and Capital. In effect, their resonance. – pzs)

Basic Terms

Robbery- Usually armed. The use of force or the threat of the use of force to get money or goods from a store or a person. Considered sloppy, violent, usually counter-productive by most of the people I ran with. Why threaten a person or business when you can walk away unharmed by just outsmarting them?

Burglary- Breaking into, entering, and relieving a domicile, office, or business of valuable property or cash.

Burn and Return- Shoplifting valuable goods from a store and then returning them for a cash refund. The vast majority of my crime-time fits into this category.

Shoplifting- Relieving a store or business of property (during business hours). Child's play—dangerous and stupid—would you trade a candy bar for a pair of handcuffs?

A quick philosophical footnote, money taken in crime is far sweeter than money earned. The fact that one relies on oneself, or a group, to outthink, outsmart and outbrave some stupid boss and his security precautions turns ill-gotten gains into reward beyond compare. Plus, the hours, while short and nerve wracking, are never boring.

Oddly, one of the best ways to begin a burglary is by getting a job in the store you plan to hit. In general places that have loads of cash, that deal with deposits in a lazy fashion, and that trust you just enough to let you know that the burglary alarms are," just for show." After a week or two of drudgery, you're ready. The neighborhood is dead quiet at night, there are rear entrances that haven't been used in years, and hopefully those entrances have windows. Timing is key and I recommend between 3 and 4 in the morning on a Monday, Tuesday or Wednesday. The cops are all changing out shifts, the security guards (if any) are drinking coffee somewhere trying to stay awake, and the neighbors are all tucked in their beds. Windows can be easily removed by breaking through the glass with a cloth wrapped hammer and steel bars can be separated using a tire jack. If the back is lit by floodlights unscrew them. For windows placed high, use a car as a boost to reach them. A quick dash into the establishment—to exactly the place where you know the days cash receipts are hid—and out. A peek in the rear view mirror to make sure you you're clean—

and gone. Like it never happened. The rewards from burglaries can be surprising, in one short twenty minute stint I walked off with almost $5,000. They can also be disheartening, one burglary took almost an hour and netted less than $300—but that was the exception.

The Burn and Return is a form of crime unique to that bastion of suburban capitalism, the Box Store. In general Box Stores need to appeal to the suburban dweller who fancies him or herself a do-it-your-self type. Therefore their return policies are insanely lax—for the time when Joe Suburb buys an 80 watt fuse when a 40 watt was needed. Further, they usually require no sales receipt, and will dole out up to $100 so long as person hasn't had a return in the previous week. As a friend of mine often commented, "Home Depot is the junkies ATM." How it goes is this—you saunter through a Box Store looking like a normal customer, pocket something worth about a hundred dollars and exit stage left. Drive to yet another Box Store of the same brand and return the thing. Trick is they will always look at your ID, likely a driver license to make sure that you haven't been returning goods at a freakishly rapid pace. Luckily, in the state I was living when these nefarious goings on occurred, the drivers license number was easily changed with a red felt-tip pen, some cigarette ash and a heart of pure forgery. As an example my driver's license number included three "8's" and these were easily changed to "6's" or "3's." I therefore had a whole universe of numerical permutations to use when returning shit I had stolen. It should be noted that when this was happening in the 90s that none of the Box Stores kept any centralized computer records at all. Going from one Lowe's to another was like going from one planet to another—

"take me to your return line." I should also note that the security at these stores is horrible, one afternoon a group of friends and I, as part of a special order, decamped from a Home Depot with a bathtub, sink and mirror set—and no one paid any attention as we grumbled and pushed the heavy bathroom ensemble through a cordon of screaming theft detectors.

Finally, car theft. While this was an outlier on my experience it was important. Car theft—for law enforcement, is huge—producing its own fateful sounding charge—grand theft auto. Therefore it was only used when absolutely necessary—as in needing a car to reach a window, or to affect a getaway from a Box Store. The trick is, its pretty easy, because people are lazy. None of my friends or me had the skills to actually hot-wire a car, but we didn't need to. At that time an incredible number of people left their cars out on the street, unlocked and with the keys somewhere inside. It was crazy. One time two friends and I walked a street in the dead of night and found no less than three cars—on a single block—we could have stolen. We only took one. It should be noted that we always left the autos, unharmed, somewhere that they would be found—and in one case even left a thank you note. A Camaro I think—it was a sweet ride.

In closing these activities occurred a long time ago in a galaxy far, far away; in the 90s specifically, your criminal experience may vary. In my mind crime functions as a resonance between politics, desperation, and fun. And what better way to triangulate insurrection?

Many Happy Escapes

Waging the War on Christmas

King Mob and the Battle of Selfridges

2017

By late 1966 Situationist-inspired theory and praxis began to manifest across Western Europe and North America. In the USA the cultural interventions and publishing done by the Up Against the Wall Motherfucker (UAW/MF) affinity group echoed many themes considered Situationist. The artist, minor Bakunin scholar, and major league trouble maker Ben Morea is just one notable example of the type that was attracted to the Motherfuckers. It should be noted the Morea's journal (presciently titled *Black Mask*) contains some of the better North American anarchist critical material from the 60s—a living theory instead of the reliving of history. The Detroit-based White Panthers also stand out; though most contemporary younger theorists haven't had the chance to interact with their ideas or actions. John Sinclair, one of the founding members of the White Panthers was also involved with the Fifth Estate in the late sixties, which traces a direct line from Situationist inspired ideas to the US post-left, and internationally to Black Anarchy. Which leads us to the UK and two brothers trying their best to drink their way through art school in Newcastle-on-Tyne, David and Stuart Wise. Much as the surrealists were drawn into Marxist and Trotskyite circles, the Wise brothers soon they found their cultural interventions leading them inexorably to ultra-left communist/anarchist ideas and Situationist theory. Their investigation was bolstered by a series of meeting with Morea and Vaneigem on the Lower East

Side of NYC. By late 1967 the Wise's had dropped out of art school, moved to London, found a few like-minded maniacs and founded King Mob. An affinity group dedicated to the project of cultural subversion.

King Mob from the very beginning was a project predicated to action, to the manufacture of situations that illuminated in the harshest light the various predations and weaknesses of nation-state and Capital. Here again, the conundrum of organization resolved, where the coordination of activity defined and circumscribed King Mobs existence; not an ideology and certainly not the wholly reactionary "desire to belong to something greater then one's self." In terms of the types of actions King Mob perpetrated, an example from April of 1968. By Winter of 67-68 most of the group had moved to West London and immediately began to interact and work with some local groups. One of the biggest grievances then was the lack of playgrounds and green space for the local children. It had become so bad that several kids had been hit by cars while playing, and in one instance a child had been killed. It wasn't that there was a dearth of space for the kids to gambol; rather the on-going process of gentrification had enclosed large swaths of open grass with seven-foot tall fences. The local Communist/community activist types held a lame demonstration in an attempt to open up the play areas, to no avail. The bourgeoisie were simply not giving up the means of recreation to the marxist rabble.

Enter King Mob, who after a little planning hired a gorilla suit and a circus horse costume (the kind with a front and back piece—so two bipeds can impersonate a quadruped) and settled into a local pub for a few drinks. After achieving an appropriate level of chemical con-

viviality one member went into the bathroom, downed some speed, put on the gorilla costume and burst back into the pub, roaring and howling. The signal given the remaining conspirators poured into the street, the circus horse costume was donned and adjusted, and they moved as a group towards a fenced off park, Powis Square, announcing loudly to the neighborhood their intention to tear the fences down and then to play. The growing crowd finally arrived at the objective of the action and set about tearing down the fences, followed almost immediately by the arrival of the police. Violent scuffles ensued and the police arrested the circus horse, the raging amphetamine-addled gorilla and four humans. The circus then moved on to the courtroom where the King Mob agitators showed little desire to back down in the face of the law. As an example, the front end of the horse pleaded guilty while the rear end pleaded not guilty, using the completely reasonable argument that he had no idea that the head of the horse was breaking the law. The courtroom confrontation was written up by a columnist in The New Statesmen and King Mob, much to their amusement, found themselves with a smattering of (almost) positive publicity. Finally, as a result of further community intervention, including the successful tearing down of the fence surrounding the park, Powis Square was officially redesignated a children's playground, which it remains to this day. But this was all prelude to the Selfridges outrage and the temporary breakdown of law, order, private property and the Christmas Spirit that it occasioned.

King Mob actions continued apace and began to settle more and more into attacks on spectacular consumption and the contradictions of Capital. So when

Ian Clegg, one of the fringe members of KM proposed a Christmas invasion of Selfridges, it was taken for what it was, an intervention of pure genius. As an aside, Selfridges & Co. is a chain of high-end department stores located primarily in the United Kingdom. Originally founded in 1908 and with a flagship store located in Oxford Street the chain is roughly analogous to Marshall Fields or Saks Fifth Avenue in the United States in terms of merchandise, clientele, and marketing. In other words, King Mob and Selfridges were made for each other. In preparation for the action a leaflet was produced, outlining a general hatred for Christmas, deriding the hypocrisy of the holiday and encouraging the reader to turn the holiday into a true event of giving. The flyer failed to mention when and where the action was to take place but word of mouth carried the message to the ultra-left radical community of London. So sometime during the month of December 1968, no one is quite sure of the date and the action was completely ignored by the main stream media, members of King Mob, including Ben Trueman dressed as St. Nick and a young Malcolm McLaren, came barging into Selfridge's. On the way to the toy department, Trueman—already in character—took a detour to the candy section and started handing out Christmas goodies to any one brave enough to approach him and his entourage. No doubt the store security at this time registered a faint blip on the radar screen that something very wrong was happening near the confectionery aisle. From there, King Mob moved like a wave towards the toy section, and as they arrived Santa and his elves began to strip the shelves of their very expensive toys and hand them out to the wide-eyed and no doubt delighted children. This

new take on potlatch lasted some minutes before the inevitable arrival of both store security apparatchiks and the Metropolitan Police. Kris Kringle and a few of his more impassioned elves tangled with the forces of authority and were finally placed under arrest. When the dust cleared the real dilemma was brought into view... what to do about all those unpaid for toys? The management of Selfridges had only two options, to let the children keep the toys and hope for some good publicity, a la Miracle on 34th Street, or to demand that store security and the police take the toys from the children and place them back on the shelves. Ultimately, the final decision was a foregone conclusion, and in an extreme turn of good luck there were no press photographers present as Selfridges security staff and the London Police relieved the kids of their Christmas presents from Santa and returned them to their displays.

There are usually two reactions to this intervention; a) Wow, that was mean, or; b) Wow, that was brilliant. Both are true. Misanthropy and scathing critical theory often co-exist as a result of necessity or resonance (witness Oscar Wilde). The action also reminds us that interventions need not always be political, and in fact historically the terrain of culture has proven to be equally important for the anarchist project.

Finally I offer this as a Christmas gift to my Comrades, in recognition of the fact that the best presents are usually stolen, as I have reappropriated this history and now give it to you.

Merry Christmas Comrades!!

Pure Black:

An Emerging Consensus Among Some Comrades?

The term "black" anarchist has been thrown around recently in a number of international milieux and journals. Indeed during the last few years of my travels throughout North and South America and Europe I have noted repeated attempts to define, through action and theory, the ideas associated with black anarchy. Following is a brief, incomplete outline of some of the more common aspects of what black anarchists think and do. These tendencies are numbered for convenience, and not to show priority or importance.

Red Excursus: I will not discuss "red" anarchy as it seems well defined by the collectivist, syndicalist, communist variants of anarchist ideas that were developed more than a hundred years ago and still enjoy a great deal of popularity and adherents. I emphasize that I don't see the two various strains as being mutually exclusive, opposed, or even necessarily very different at the macro level. The old sectarianism and exclusion, a gnawing symptom of Marxism and the Social Democracy, plays no role in this essay. I am attempting to describe and provide some topography to a growing, relatively new agreement among a particular group of my comrades, in doing so I support and encourage those who follow different anarchist ideas and paths. No one is wrong, no one is right. The best we can hope for is clarity, not hegemony.

1) Violence

In this context violence is defined as a tactic, whether

applied to insurrection, riot, attentat, or simple refusal. There is an almost overwhelming consensus among the black anarchists that the use of violence is necessary, indeed desirable, perhaps essential. The international growth of the various FA(I)-IRF cells, the example of the Greek CCF and Revolutionary Struggle, the concomitant growth of the non-anarchist but equally engaging actions of the eco-extremists in Mexico, Chile and Brazil, and the myriad anonymous burnings, ATM destruction, and attacks that populate the current global anarchist media echo this resonance. Whether it is the Molotov arching gracefully through the night air, the flaming barricade, or the flagpole-turned truncheon-crashing into fascist bone, the black anarchist greets all with approval.

2) Individualist

There is a strong individualist strain in black anarchism, mostly as a function of activity and less due to long nights breathlessly reading Stirner. In essence when engages in actions it's easier to work in small groups, and sometimes alone rather than attempt to build large or even medium sized organizations. These small groups which I'll call teams, a word taken from our Athenian comrades, bring into clear relief the importance of individual initiative, they decentralize decision and action, they emphasize clearly that while there is no I in team, there is an "m" and an "e."

3) Nihilist

In this instance nihilism I'll interpret as the realpolitik of anarchism in 2017-all the various ideas, concepts and conceits of an anarchist victory via revolution or insurrection in the current context are nothing more than po-

litical heroin. Once this simple, obvious fact is accepted there are two courses, resignation and lassitude or savage attack without any real hope of success. The black anarchist chooses the latter, always.

4) Illegalist

A part of the black anarchist consensus is the desire to completely reject any compromise or cooperation with nation-state, Capital, and markets. Leading many in the milieu to undertake consciously political illegal activity. This varies from place to place but includes the positive activities of squatting, occupations, shoplifting, out-right store robbery, burglary and more. In terms of negative activities this new variant of illegalism includes refusal of all taxes, tolls, welfare, NGO handouts, and state-run free clinics.

5) Informal Organization

There is a real and healthy fear among the black anarchists of formal organization. The anti-organizational tendency is not new in the historical anarchist milieu, nor in the various anarchisms that saw first light since the 1970s in the USA, Canada, and parts of Western Europe. The open espousal of informal, temporary, limited adherence to organizational tenets is very new. This loosening of the organizational form, the inclusionary laissez-faire stance adopted by black anarchists and their organizations may be one of the tendencies most lasting contributions. In most historical cases anarchists have constructed organizations that virtually ooze the ideas and characteristics of the dominant society. In a few short years the black anarchists have done a great deal of theoretical violence to such organizational non-

sense, in the future I hope they do more.

This outline of black anarchism is brief, incomplete, and a piece of journalism, not conjecture. This is what I saw, what I experienced in the past several years visiting and working with anarchists on three continents. It is both memoriam and prospectus.

The Elephant and the Blind Man: A Response to Burley's 25 Theses on Fascism

In a recent posting on the Institute for Anarchist Studies website Shane Burley, the author of *Fascism Today: What it Is and How to End It*, presents twenty five theses which seek to define and describe modern fascism. Unfortunately the work is flawed as he refuses to provide any kind of historical analysis to the subject, ignores previous theoretical work on fascism as either antiquated or inarticulate, provides a uniquely conflicted analysis, and fails to acknowledge the fact that he eventually concludes by encouraging the left to adopt, adapt, and refine the tactics used by fascism.

Burley fails to include any history of fascism for guidance in understanding its rise, development and in two cases at least, triumph. Rather he indicates that virtually any combination of social, economic and cultural conditions can give rise to fascism. Yet history is clear on this point there are certain general contours associated with the rise of fascism including the failed national aspirations of war, economic misery, a restive population, the saturation of culture with nationalist propaganda and a delegitimized, weakened government. The list goes on, and for Burley to discount such a historically consistent convergence of events and trends adds nothing to our understanding of fascism, either historical or modern. In fact, it obfuscates.

There is little attempt by Burley to use any of the previous theorists of fascism, and when, on occasion, he

tries to do so he fails. Two examples, he cites Arendt's concept of the "banality of evil" in reference to fascist recruitment and," to characterize the casual complicity and bureaucratic malaise of the German people in the events of World War II and the Holocaust." What Arendt is really applying the concept to is Eichmann and her observations of him during his trial in Jerusalem. And what she is specifically referencing is Eichmann's lack of ability to think independently, his braggadocio, his desire to join and participate in organizations, and what she described in her final interview as his "outrageous stupidity." It is very much a subjective banality that Arendt develops not a social one as Burley infers. Second, Burley references the resonance between fascism and culture in Theses 6 and 17, in a clear attempt to channel Walter Benjamin, the citation however, while nominally correct, is deeply misunderstood. Burley says that fascism seeks to inhabit places of culture and by so doing to somehow infuse its ideals. Benjamin, alternatively, describes the fascist "aestheticization of politics" as the mixing of artistic sensibility with everyday life—that fascism seeks to breakdown the walls of the museum, the gallery, the reading room and to bring them down into the streets. The torchlight parades, the marching hordes in Nuremberg (or Charlottesville), and the book burnings are exemplars in this instance, not a portrait of Hitler in a toga nor Richard Spencer at the podium. Benjamin also takes a swipe at the left in this discussion when he points out that to counter the fascist aestheticization of politics the state-communists or the Social Democracy simply reversed the process by the politicization of art—and Burley conflates one for the other. Burley also ignores completely the work of the

Frankfurt School, Reich, Guerin and others who bring insight to the psychology, economics and the realpolitik of fascism—leaving the reader with a desire for something more focused, with delineated arguments instead of tedious lists.

There is a shallowness and inconsistency in Burley's Theses. They ring hollow. Burley conflates surface phenomenon with ideology particularly when he discusses violence. In Thesis 18 he tells us that fascism seeks to hide its violence but that inevitably," [w]ithin a long enough time frame there will always be killing." The quote is minimally correct, but misses the point. The ideal here is not violence, though it is hardly hidden and is used by fascism to attract brawling converts, in addition to being a street tactic; the ideal is death— the fascist veneration of Thanatos. A quick perusal of history suffices in this case, the propagation by the Francoists of the slogan "Long Live Death," the universal use of the death's head in the fascist imaginary, and the virtual sainthood of fascist martyrs. At the level of cultural artifact—one of Hitler's first building projects was the construction of a mausoleum for the dead of the Beer Hall Putsch. The fascist ideal of death is reflexive; it not only applies to the enemy—who impedes the fascist cause—but also the fascist who furthers the cause through a (hopefully) glorious demise.

At the level of politics there are a few significant mistakes as well. First Burley states in Thesis 2," Fascism does not necessitate a specific type of statecraft (or a state at all)." Nothing could be further from the truth. The article in the Treccani Encyclopedia on fascism signed by Mussolini, but likely authored by Giovanni Gentile, develops the Hegelian notion of the Absolute

and Ethical State—ergo without the state, and a very specific type of state—there can be no fascism. The NSDAP, while less philosophically astute, engineered their state through the "coordination" of existing governmental bodies—and again it was the explicit capture of the state mentioned in Mein Kampf as the first milestone for fascism— that set the stage. Try implementing fascism without a nation-state (defined as the monopoly of force over a delineated geographic area); can't be imagined, let alone done.

Burley plays the nihilist card as well, though this time its use is unique. He states that fascists use nihilism which he describes as "an apolitical destructive force" in order to destroy morality so as to be able to reconstruct a new fascist morality. As a rejoinder one need merely point out that the nihilist rejection of morality is based in part, on the idea that history is directionless, and hence the idea of either an old morality or a new fascist one are equally meaningless. Without teleology, morality is a phantom...a tale told to a child to defeat misbehavior. And excluding vulgar marxist communism (and Fukuyama), no political philosophy or movement is more self-assured as to its place as the termination of Western history than fascism.

Shane Burley contends that fascism requires mass politics, popular support, and the ongoing destructive upheaval of class society in order to triumph. His cure for the fascist disease are fascist tactics— mass politics and popular support. Which leads to the final critique of the theses, that they basically also apply to the left. Excluding the discussions regarding ethnic nationalism, if you do a simple replace of the word "fascism" for "the left" in the text the result is an engaging description of

all marxist and some anarchist tendencies. The same tactics, the same flaws, the same contradictions. The same bullshit.

There are some parts of the theses that work, there is much that doesn't. As we begin to autopsy the past few months in order to ascertain what worked and what didn't in the fight against fascism there is a real need for rigor and reflection. Analysis requires grounding, an understanding of history and previous theoretical constructs, consistency and looking to the enemy not to inform contestation but to inspire new creative ways to destroy. These requirements are not met by the Twenty-Five Theses.

In a Moral Universe, there are no Anarchists:
Hakim Bey, Robert P. Helms, and leave out the liberal

(Before you continue, know that this article is wholly my responsibility, that Hakim Bey has neither seen, read, nor is aware of its existence. I take full responsibility for its content.)

Better late than never. It's been a little over a decade since the articles by Robert P. Helms (RPH) appeared on the internet smearing Peter Lamborn Wilson/Hakim Bey as a paedophile. When they were first made public I was, unfortunately, in no position to respond. In fact, I was in a drug treatment facility in lieu of some rather impressive legal charges centered on my addiction to speedballing heroin and cocaine and the economic activities attendant thereto. I should also note that in my researches around this event no one else in the milieu had the time, ability, or cussedness to counter the onslaught of innuendo and hinted transgression. Most folks ignored the charges, some muttered darkly, and a handful, like Laure Akai, went out of their way to up the ante and hint ominously about what they "really knew."

First off, this article is not a defense of Hakim Bey, not because his actions and writings are indefensible, rather because no defense is required. To even begin to enumerate the various charges made by Helms is to allow him, his fellow travelers, and the accusations they made a credence that they don't deserve. If the

measurement of a critical theorist writings is assessed against the morality of bourgeois society then—among others, my comrades and me, stand arrested, tried and convicted in the dock of the dominant culture. The only plea we could rationally make is nolo contendre, and hope for the best.

But this isn't about the charges made against Hakim, nor about the mediocre men and women who raised them and continue to propagate them. It's about a political milieu so unsure of its own bearings, so consistent in its own inconsistency, that when charges—whose etiology is wholly associated with the Social Enemy—are leveled at one of its best thinkers and writers that the vast majority of adherents slink away in venomous silence and embarrassment.

What is at issue, and what one sees play out, occasionally, in the comments section of @news, r/anarchism and several other sites and podcasts is the reintroduction of a morality based in the discourse of the dominant society. While the anonymous commenting bottom-feeders at the various anarchist sites can perhaps be forgiven for a lack of mental acuity as they troll for fools and google words that confuse them, Helm's can claim no such dodge. As he informs us, he is an "independent anarchist historian," and that presumably means that he has read a few books about the history and philosophy of the politics that he claims to espouse. This presumed knowledge fails to peek through any of his essays regarding Hakim Bey. As one example, the failure to mention and discuss the romance of Severino DiGiovanni and America Scarfò, age 26 and 15 respectively, when they began their relationship shows a real lack of integrity. Further the dearth in Helm's articles

of any theoretical justification for the denunciation, no discussion of the requisite standardization and solemnization of the bourgeois bedroom, nor the family as the fundamental building block of slavery—sexual, industrial, and psychological. Rather after giving us a quick and breathless tour of some of the passages that most tweaked his liberal conscience, he states: "I will not offer any reason to be offended by the paedophile literature or the misogynist position of Hakim Bey [...]. The ethical idiocy of both are self-evident, and neither is part of anything that should be considered an anarchist idea." In other words trust Helms, it's bad—so bad in fact that an oxymoron like self-evident applies, just like it does to the glaring truths in the Declaration of Independence.

If things had stopped there, that likely would have been it, and Helms would have returned to the circle of hell reserved for moralists posing as anarchists. But that's not what happened. Instead, libcom.org, picked it up and ran with it. An understandable mistake, red anarchists aren't know for their intelligence, especially libcom who seem better at recruiting police informants than real workers to their moribund cause. Going so far as to publish a web page called Beywatch and featuring exactly two articles—both authored by Helms. The rot of innuendo spread quickly and precipitously and even made it to the web page of law and order types that are dedicated to hounding folks who write or discuss children and sexuality. Which if memory serves is the basis of most Western psychology.

Meanwhile, those who knew better, those who saw through the abject moralist scam that Helms had perpetrated remained painfully silent. Likely many hoped that Helms would either just disappear, or alternately

that their friendship with Hakim would remain... unmentioned, by anyone.

I will follow no such course. Hakim Bey is my friend, I have known him for thirty years. His writings have influenced thousands, mention his name in Europe, Asia, or South America and people immediately know his work. They respect him. They want to know more about him.

And Hakim is still teaching us lessons, less through his writing than by the example of his fall and rehabilitation. The moralizing liberals who pose as anarchists are the cops, bureaucrats, and corrections officers of our future. Many new folks are hoodwinked, they don't get it, and its up to the critical theorists of today to teach, and guide them through example, through writing. To take the bag of snakes that is the dominant society and to lay the squirming reptiles out straight—so that everyone understands how denunciation pays the wage of Capital and nation-state. That the slogan, "It is forbidden to forbid," isn't just rhetoric. It's a signpost on where we must be headed, and anyone who stands in the way, or obstructs that process—pays the price.

My Date With Sam Dolgoff:
A Memory of Old-Timey, NYC Anarchy

(I am accused of being less than fair with my red comrades, of being dismissive, arrogant. While on occasion that may be true, I will say that beyond the theoretical squabbles, the back and forth of ideas, I maintain an underlying sense of empathy, of solidarity for its own sake with these individuals and tendencies. In addition, I realize that being an anarchist at twenty is easy, at thirty is difficult, and over fifty is outrageous. I resolved at the age of 27 to never look back, to follow the lifeway of an anarchist until there is no life left. I didn't arrive at these two sentiments through rigorous analysis – rather, they were given to me by a red anarchist couple, sixty years my senior, Sam and Esther Dolgoff. To whom this article is dedicated, and to whom I still owe a great deal – pzs)

"You're both soaked. Stay on the mat, I'll get you towels."
"Yes, Sam," my friend says.
"Yes, Sir…err Sam," I say, feeling a little embarrassed at inadvertently using the formal appellation.
"Sir…" he mumbles to himself as he chokes back a smile, then turning back to get some towels he says it one more time under his breath with a low laugh," ….sir."

It is March 1986, it is the Lower East Side of New York, and it is pouring outside. Suffice it to say that by that date I had become an anarchist with all the attendant vices and virtues, I hated the state, I lived on the Lower East Side, I attended interminable meetings; I read much and worked little. The city had two operating anarchist groups the Libertarian Book Club,

and the Anarchist Switchboard. I was a participant in both. There were a lot of folks through each of these collectives, but mainly a hardcore group of about 20 souls maintained the beating heart of anarchy in that Foul Year of our Lord, 1986. I had been friends with LA for several months and she had called, saying she was on her way to see Sam Dolgoff and invited me to tag along, so I met her at the Anarchist Switchboard on that March afternoon. She said that we should just walk to his apartment as, other than busses, no trains would put us anywhere near his place. I asked where that was and she said that he lived in a building for retired members of the NY painters union. LA had made it her business to bounce around New York and introduce herself to as many of the old time anarchists as possible. Among her acquaintances were Sam and Esther Dolgoff, the staff of the recently defunct Yiddish anarchist journal Freie Arbeiter Stimme (The Free Voice of Labor), Vilario—an old Italian gentleman who at one time was involved with the Galleanisti, and it was rumoured also Malatesta. So this trip to the Dolgoff's was just her doing her best to string these old time anarchists to the younger anarchist scene—to maintain some semblance of continuity.

After we dried off Sam invited us to sit in the main room at a dinner table. As we settled in I got a look at him, a short man, glasses—built stocky and compact with a grey shock of hair, longer on top. He walked with a distinct gait, like he was used to carrying heavy loads. From the kitchen came the sound of pots and pans being sorted and rustled. As we sat down Esther looked around the corner and smiled at us. A small women in a house dress, stocky like her husband, with glimmering white hair. She said," Welcome Comrades, lunch in a

minute," and then returned to the kitchen and the pans.

There was something familial in the conversation, he saw us as his kids—perhaps a bit misguided and dressed badly—but relations nonetheless. LA introduced me and Sam asked the typical anarchist questions—what was I doing, what was I reading, what did I think of that son-of-a-bitch president, etc.. Much of our conversation was simple, topical. Sam talked about what he called the "Soviet Onion," the horrible waste the whole thing had been—reliving the defeat of a revolution gone very wrong. We discussed Bakunin, a topic that Sam knew well, as he had edited an anthology of his works. I asked him about the mature Bakunin's ideas of the lumpen being the revolutionary subject and he smiled and shrugged and said, "We'll see."

After refusing any help Esther proceeded to set the table. A simple meal, spaghetti sauce out of the jar, pasta, white bread and butter. Water to drink. As we ate Esther was having something of a struggle with the pasta and she picked a small piece up and put it into her mouth with her fingers. As she did so she looked at me, winked and wiped the sauce off her cheek with a napkin. In that moment, my heart melted. Whatever I felt for these two Comrades, it was strong, and it rang like a bell in the center of my chest. We ate, we laughed, we chatted about Chicago, the Haymarket Martyrs, and how fucked up the rain was. After lunch LA and I carried the dishes back to the kitchen and set them to soak.

We spoke for another twenty minutes and then LA and I got ready to leave. I asked to use the bathroom, and Esther pointed me in the right direction. As I walked back through the hallway I began to notice the paintings and drawings on the wall. They were not the

usual saccharine depictions of pastoral or city scenes that one glimpses on the walls of most elderly folks dwellings. These were drawings of barricades, a man brandishing a lit Molotov, bands of people marching in demonstrations, a portrait of Kropotkin. This was an anarchist home, and a proud one at that.

As we bundled up Sam invited us back as he shook our hands, Esther embraced us with a smile and a tap on the shoulder. As we walked off under a dark and wet Lower East Side sky LA said," So, what do you think?"

"Gives me hope…I guess," I replied.

"Oh, in what?"

"The future, no, I mean, my future."

"And that means…"

"That not all anarchists are twenty somethings who will fade into the suburbs. Some hang on, regardless. The hope is that I hang on, like Sam."

"I get it," she said,"…me too." And to this day we have both stayed in the fight.

Insurgent Tactics 307

T.E. Lawrence, Võ Nguyên Giáp, and the Great Emu War

1.2018

Prelude to War

As the First World War was winding down the so-called nation-state of Australia began preparing for the inevitable influx of ex-soldiers from the battlefields of Europe and the Middle East. As part of the planning vast stretches in Southwestern Australia were earmarked for the returning combatants to turn into profitable grain and vegetable ranches. The economic chaos of the Stock Market Crash, and the concomitant failure of the Australian government to pay any promised subsidies, especially for wheat, brought the farmers to near ruin. Then when least expected a marauding force of some 20,000 Emus, struck. Brought into the area, no doubt, by the abundant irrigation water and all those tasty unharvested crops. The farmers demanded the government do something about the avian insurgents and in response war was declared in October of 1932. The eclipse of homo sapiens, as the dominant species on the planet, began in that instant.

The Emu is the second largest flightless bird on the planet, eclipsed only by its African cousin, the ostrich. Emus can reach heights of six feet, weigh up to 90 pounds and can run about 40mph at top speed. Then as now, little is known of Emu behavior, individual or social. In general they are considered skittish, the females can be very aggressive to each other during mating as they compete for male affections. Emus tend to forage in groups, likely family or hatchling related. Finally Emus are omnivorous, eating bugs, soft plants and seeds, and

definitely wheat.

Weapons/Order of Battle

Emus: 20,000 Emus (a fuckload). The Emu is effectively weaponless, save their ability to run fast and the fact that when threatened they will dodge left and right as they flee.

Humans: Seventh Heavy Battery of the Royal Australian Artillery led by Major G.P.W. Meredith. Two Lewis guns, 500-600 rounds per minute, muzzle velocity 2,440 feet per second, effective firing range 880 yards. 10,000 rounds of ammunition.

Initial hostilities were postponed due to heavy rain on October 31, 1932. Giving both sides the time to plan for the coming engagement. On November 2, 1932 a group of about fifty Emus were sighted near Campion. The Australians began firing their Lewis guns from fixed positions and the birds, in a move described as "inspired chaos," fled at top speed in all directions to minimize casualties. Only a handful of Emus were killed as a result of this first encounter. A modern commenter states that the birds, "mobility, durability and blind panic rendered them virtually immune to machine gun bullets."

Lesson: Ninety percent of all insurgent activity is evasion (Lawrence, Giáp).

On November 4 the war continued. This time a group of about 1,000 Emus wandered into an ambush set by the Australians. The Australians opened fire with their Lewis guns, which promptly jammed and once again, the Emus escaped with only a handful of fatalities. In this encounter a new Emu behavior, never previously recorded, was witnessed—the breaking of the

birds into smaller groups, each with a lookout bird to raise the alarm when enemy forces approached. In the words of one of the Aussie soldiers,

The Emus have proved that they are not so stupid as they are usually considered to be. Each mob has its leader, always an enormous black-plumed bird standing fully six-feet high, who keeps watch while his fellows busy themselves with the wheat. At the first suspicious sign, he gives the signal, and dozens of heads stretch up out of the crop. A few birds will take fright, starting a headlong stampede for the scrub, the leader always remaining until his followers have reached safety.

Lesson: Intelligence is the heart and soul of insurgency, find the enemy, detect his strength, and destroy him when you are able—run when you are not (Lawrence).

In a new twist it was decided by the human belligerents to mount the Lewis guns onto trucks in an attempt to shoot the birds as they fled. This closed the range for the gunners but it virtually destroyed their ability to aim the weapons they fired. And when they did get lucky enough to kill an insurgent Emu, the body—all 80 pounds of it—became enmeshed in the trucks steering mechanism causing the conveyance to careen wildly off the road and destroy a full 100 meters of fence.

Lesson: The more complex the weapon system, the simpler it is to destroy or render useless (Giáp). Oh, and Emu bravery and self-sacrifice is second to none.

By November 8, 1932 the Australians had expended 2,500 rounds of ammunition to kill about two hundred Emus, a rate of ten to one. The Australian Parliament exploded in indignation, one state legislator asking sarcastically if medals were to be minted for the heroes of the

Emu War. Another legislator shot back the decorations should rightly go to the Emus who "have won every round so far."

Lesson: The essential battlefield in an insurgent struggle is the court of public opinion, controlling the discourse, as the Emus did, is of tantamount importance (Giáp, Lawrence).

Major Meredith launched a new offensive on November 13, but it too fizzled due to the superior tactics of the Emus. There seemed to be no way to increase the bullet per insurgent ratio of 10 to 1. And with 20,000 insurgent Emus a full 150,000 rounds of ammunition would have been required to even make a dent in the population. Meredith was recalled and the humans surrendered on December 2, 1932. Likely the celebrations down in Emutown included much wheat eating. Unfortunately, the war really didn't end—it just entered another phase—the Australians adjusted their tactics—providing ammunition to the farmers and offering a cash bounty on Emu beaks. In one six month period in 1934 over 57,000 bounties were claimed for Emu beaks.

To sum up, a quote from an ornithologist who was a first-hand observer of the Emu War,

The machine-gunners' dreams of point blank fire into serried masses of Emus were soon dissipated. The Emu command had evidently ordered guerrilla tactics, and its unwieldy army soon split up into innumerable small units that made use of the military equipment uneconomic. A crestfallen field force therefore withdrew from the combat area after about a month.

An Anarchist Affection for Democracy

3/2017

I've recently returned from the Kurdish Autonomous Region in Northern Syria, known as Rojava, where I had the opportunity to observe a unique form of democracy implemented by a revolutionary libertarian social movement. [...] These innovations seem like good first steps towards turning democracy from a worthless antiquity into a workable principle within anarchist theory.

Rojava: Democracy and Commune

The status of democracy within the anarchist movement seems to be a pretty hot topic at the moment. In a previous issue of *The Anarcho Tourist Review*, one author wrote that "if anarchism is to become more of a force in the world, it would mean rejecting the current democratic values." The anarchist movement, they argue, suffers from an overabundance of democracy, and we would do well to accept the implicitly elitist nature of our ideas. Moreover, and in Greece as much as elsewhere, many anarchists argue that the concept of democracy has been irredeemably corrupted by modern politics, or even that anarchy and democracy have always been incompatible. Refuting that, my aim here is to establish the importance of a commitment to democracy for the wider anarchist movement. The concepts of anarchy and democracy ultimately sit very well together—so well, I argue, that jettisoning a commitment to democracy risks seriously undermining the potency of the anarchist agenda.

[I]

First things first. This section argues that anarchism and certain forms of democracy are fully compatible. My approach here rests, no surprise, on the important distinction between direct and indirect democracy. Modern politics is dominated by the form of indirect democracy, in which politicians are elected to government, whilst direct democracy involves ordinary people engaging in political decision-making for themselves. Many anarchist critiques of democracy are implicitly focused on its indirect form—the one that dominates popular consciousness. And it is, of course, quite clear that any system in which a tiny group of political professionals makes the decisions for literally millions of others needs to be ardently rejected by anarchists. Time is wasted on talking about indirect democracy as if it were even open for consideration, because, as a political system that presupposes the need for the state, it goes without saying that it is something that no committed anarchist would touch.

In fact, we should seriously be asking whether indirect forms of political participation even deserve to be called democratic in the first place. (Chomsky, for example, is amongst the at-least-vaguely-anarchist thinkers making this point.) The core concept of democracy, arising from its etymology, is rule by the people. And it is hard to see, in a system in which a government is elected for the explicit purpose of administering a nation state, how the people could be ruling. No doubt, electoral systems allow ordinary people to have some kind of say in who will rule them, and maybe that counts for something. However, insofar as a minority group is vested with the explicit task of ruling over the rest of society, it is quite obvious that the general public

will not be in charge. As such, it seems that, just as most anarchists say that Somalia is not really in a state of anarchy, and that the Soviet Union offered neither communism nor socialism in a strict sense, we should also forget about calling the current system *democratic*. In a roundabout sense, therefore, we should reject the mainstream conception of democracy on the basis that it is undemocratic. The present discussion therefore shifts to the more interesting question of the relationship between anarchism and direct democracy.

There is no reason to think that anarchism is incompatible with this purer, more direct approach to democracy—the one genuinely committed to rule by the people. After all, if anarchists are not attempting to put the people in power, then what is it that we are even trying to do? Indeed, it is often overlooked that the core concepts of anarchy and democracy are very similar. Etymologically speaking, anarchy means *no rulers*, and it is hard to see how a situation in which there are no rulers would be significantly different from one in which the people rule themselves. If the general public is the highest political authority, and everyone thereby takes part in ruling the political community, then this is really no different from saying that there are no rulers. To establish true democracy thus can only mean to level the distinction between those who rule and those who are ruled. And this is also to say that, irrespective of whether or not people are happy to call it anarchy, a thoroughgoing commitment to democracy can only mean a rejection of the state, capitalism, and social hierarchy in general. My belief is thus that the term democracy should be reclaimed as a fighting word rather than being quarantined. Instead of ceding this revolutionary tool to the es-

tablishment, we should be thinking about how to turn democracy against the establishment—how to deprive the state of this dubious linchpin of its legitimacy.

This approach runs contrary, for example, to one forwarded in a recent article released by CrimethInc. (in *From Democracy to Freedom*). Here democracy is defined—along with aristocracy, autocracy, bureaucracy, and technocracy—as just another form of government, another attempt by one subset of society to rule over the rest. This characterization of democracy as an inherently statist ideology is hardly anomalous, and is actually pretty popular amongst anarchists nowadays ("Coordination of Anarchist Groups Against Democracy" is another key example). However, as was previously mentioned, this kind of anarchist critique is really only relevant to indirect forms of democracy. Insofar as direct democracy is genuinely realized, which is to say that all members of the political community play a role in its administration, then the existence of a government is hardly implied. To say that everyone takes part equally in governing, surely entails understanding that the government, as a body distinct from those being governed, is effectively dissolved. Here it would not be a matter of one subset of society ruling over another, but instead of ordinary people doing away with mediated political power altogether and simply ruling themselves. Unless we want a world with no rules whatsoever, there is no reason for anarchists to have a problem with rule by the people.

Having said that, however, it should be noted that not all forms of direct democracy deflect the worry of reproducing governmental structures. Particularly outside of more radical circles, direct democracy is normally realized in the form of majoritarian decision-making.

Here the majority gets their way, and those in the minority simply have to put up with what is decided. Now, it is true that majoritarian systems reproduce (albeit in a much more fluid sense) an order in which one subset of society rules over the rest. However, this would be a silly reason to do away with talk of democracy altogether. All it suggests is that we should prioritize systems based on achieving consensus. Insofar as everyone consents to the decisions they are subject to, there is no hierarchy of one section of society over another. Moreover, and not by coincidence either, consensus decisionmaking is also the option that remains truest to the democratic ideal, because majoritarian approaches really only offer rule by most of the people, and not by the people in general.

Bringing this discussion of the compatibility between anarchy and democracy to a close, it is worth taking a quick look at the example offered by the Occupy movement. Something striking here is that the typical Occupy camp was, arguably, a microcosm of an anarchist society. These camps were political communities organized horizontally, without leaders, and on the basis of consensus, all of which was combined with a hostility towards the state, capitalism, and oppressive social structures more generally. And yet, the movement was not rooted in anarchist ideas, but instead in a fuzzier commitment to "real democracy." This overall point surely confirms how close, both in theory and in practice, anarchy and democracy really are to one another (something that advocates of both ideals frequently overlook). All that needs to be done is to interpret the concept of democracy in a more thoroughgoing way, one that refuses to presuppose that the current global order is in fact democratic. However, the Occupy move-

ment has since melted away, or worse been siphoned off into reheating an incoherent enthusiasm for parliamentary politics. But perhaps the real problem here lay not with the convictions of those involved, but instead with our own failure, as anarchists, to nourish those convictions with the radical depth they deserved. Henceforth we must make it clear: anyone serious about getting to the bottom of the democratic ideal can only unearth the fountainhead of anarchy.

[II]

This section argues for the usefulness of the principle of democracy for anarchist organizing. It is worth noting that the principle of anarchy—the commitment to bringing about a world without rulers—really only entails a purely negative political outlook. This is because abolishing mastery is only necessarily connected to the destruction of the current order, and fails to imply what kinds of social structures (if any) should be constructed as replacements for the currently dominant ones. In other words, whilst anarchy explains what we disagree with, we fail to propose alternatives. In this sense, an exclusive commitment to the principle of anarchy is consistent with an outcome that most would find patently unacceptable—perhaps a world in which there are no rulers, but that is just as atomized, dysfunctional, and individualistic as the decomposed pseudosociety we see today. This confirms the need to be on the lookout for additional political principles—more positive in nature—in order to generate a more comprehensive anarchist political programme.

Here is where the principle of anti-statist democracy becomes somewhat indispensible (at least for more pro-

social approaches to anarchist organizing). The relevant theme here is autonomy (this goal is possibly the most viable candidate for the highest good of the anarchist movement). On the one hand, seeking autonomy is often thought of as individualistic: the process by which someone comes to behave in a way consistent with their authentic beliefs or desires, and is thereby established (as Kant would have said) as the giver of their own law. On the other hand, it is no less important to recognize the undeniably collective dimension to attaining autonomy. Even Stirner, for example—as hardened an anarchist individualist as you could find—argued that some kind of union of egoists was necessary to promote individual flourishing. This brings to mind a more collectivist (and also distinctly more Spinozan) approach to understanding autonomy—one in which a number of individuals come together to form a single body, decide what form of community self-organization, and thereby realize their autonomy in common with one another.

This concept of collective rulership—one that could be applied to offer a positive characterization of our proposed social structures—is precisely the one offered by the more thoroughgoing interpretation of democracy outlined in the previous section. And while some anarchists perhaps prefer not to use the term *democracy* to refer to this concept, avoiding the word would require coming up with an etymologically identical term. In sum, anarchist democracy (really the only kind) can be understood simply as autonomy collectivised—the attempt not merely to balance the interests of the individual with those of the collective, but to strengthen both by their union. In this sense, one might say that the principles of anarchy and democracy are symbiotic: anarchy gives

rule by the people the necessary radical depth, whilst democracy provides our antistatism with a blueprint for planning how the future will be organized.

To make this discussion less abstract, I conclude by positing (as was previously implied) that this concept of collective rulership can only be practically manifested in the form of consensus decisionmaking, because really this is the only way of maintaining a robustly horizontal organizational structure—one in which the opinions of all individual members are supported by the decisions reached by the collective. As such, consensus decision-making is the only model capable of combining both individualistic and collectivistic forms of autonomy, a synthesis in which the individual is incorporated into a larger communal body without sacrificing their personal dispositions. Moreover, this model is already used in many radical circles—from animal rights and environmentalist campaigns through more mainstream movements such as Occupy and Nuit Debout, right down to most of the squats here in Athens. Of course, there can be issues with consensus, but I maintain that these are avoidable, to the extent that they are results of consensus done badly. At the very least, it seems clear that consensus should be sought as a first port of call, and that it can only legitimately be abandoned—if at all—insofar as collective functionality would be significantly compromised (maybe this would be something to think about if anarchist communes begin federating with one another in the future).

[III]

Moving on, this section strengthens the plausability of the anarchist commitment to democracy by clarifying

the limits of democratic processes (and, in doing so, alleviates the fear that the revolution will just be a big, long meeting...). My basic view here is that, in those cases where formal political association is needed, we should be ordering such interactions democratically. Importantly, however, this is not to say that all aspects of political life require formal association. In fact, it seems clear that the vast majority of them do not, and here democracy is irrelevant simply because no form of rule whatsoever is applicable. If people are behaving in ways that have no significant bearing on the interests of others, then there is no need to consult a collective decision-making body regarding the relevant issues in the first place. Because a commitment to democracy is not some panacea that will remedy all the shortcomings of the anarchist movement, it is merely a useful way of thinking about how to unite a diverse range of individuals into a single body (and only when doing so is necessary). The door nonetheless remains open to the great many instances of our lives that have no need for formal association.

This point can be developed as a criticism of how enthusiasm for democracy, while essential for movements such as Occupy and Nuit debout, was also sometimes taken a bit too far. On the one hand, it was stunning to see demonstrated the redundancy of centralized institutions when organizing around issues that significantly affected the interests of all participants: where and when to set up a protest camp, or what rules those within it would be subject to. On the other hand, it was a big problem for some of the more docile participants in the movement to disown more militant actions—such as confrontations with the police, or attacks on the flows of capital—by

claiming that they lacked the support of the general assembly (which not everyone showed up to anyway!).

Here a phony commitment to democracy was used to tell other members of the political community what to do. And I say that this commitment was phony because the very point of democracy is to promote autonomy. Applying collective decisionmaking processes to irrelevant aspects of the struggle ultimately does the exact opposite. Respecting autonomy often means knowing when it is time to agree to disagree, and this requires encouraging, or at least being willing to tolerate, a diversity of tactics. Otherwise, refusing to allow others to act in ways that seem disagreeable makes such movements begin to look like the monolithic, totalizing forces that dominate global politics today—precisely what they were supposed to be challenging. At the end of day, just as those who were more militant were not forcing others to take part in their actions, those who did not want to take part also had no right to try to stop them. And, while it is true that militancy often invites state repression, it is no less true that boredom and passivity are always going to be at least as big a threat to any vibrant social movement.

Finally, it is important to explain something that so far I have only hinted at. While I think a commitment to democracy is integral for the construction of a cohesive political community, it is undeniable that many anarchists ultimately have no interest in being part of a united body at all. Plenty of the anarchists in Exarcheia feel this way, as elsewhere (particularly those of a more nihilist flavour). Rather than wanting to restructure politics in an authentically nonhierarchical way, these anarchists are seemingly more committed to smashing politics altogether. If they believed there were cases in

which formal political association were useful, perhaps they would accept some kind of commitment to democracy, but they hold that probably there are no cases in which such relations are worthwhile. This is not the place to wade into the already long simmering debate between nihilist and social anarchism (a disagreement that is increasingly tense in Athens nowadays). Nor do I want to discredit those anarchists who have much more time for burning, and none at all for meetings, because this attitude is surely an important part of any effective mosaic of resistance. All I will say here is that my case for the importance of democracy is based on the presumption that we should be aiming to build a cohesive political community, and those anarchists who have no interest in working together in the first place ultimately escape my conclusion.

[IV]

In the article quoted in my introductory paragraph ("Fragments for the New Politics"), the author argues that it is not merely statists who tell the rest of society what to do, because we anarchists do it all the time as well. Given the fact that anarchism is currently somewhat unpopular, it follows that every assertion of our beliefs is based on the assumption that the vast majority of people are wrong, and that we are the ones who know what is best for them. Now this hardly sounds very democratic... On the contrary, it sides much more with Emma Goldman's ominous claim that "all true anarchists are aristocrats." The author argues that, rather than abandoning a commitment to democracy, we should mix it with more centralized political forms such as aristocracy. This was allegedly the model seen in An-

cient Athenian democracy, in which popular participation was balanced with the guidance of aristocrats such as Pericles. And this approach is supposedly also quite sensible, because ordinary people clearly make bad decisions all the time.

My response is that, while anarchism can be called aristocratic in a rhetorical sense, our obvious pretensions to being a righteous minority do not actually override a commitment to democracy. Yes, we tell people what we think is best, but, unlike the aristocracy, the safeguarding of autonomy constrains our words, so that we don't exceed the force of recommendation. Anarchism is not about taking control of the state in order to attempt to liberate the people, it is about convincing the masses to knowingly take the steps necessary to liberate themselves—this much is clear. In fact, an outright hostility to such aristocratic attitudes is surely presupposed by the important recognition amongst anarchists that parliamentarian approaches to politics are nowadays completely outdated.

The key point here is that, beyond their undone top-buttons and hollow affirmations of people power, statists like Syriza are no less committed than the right-wing to supporting a system in which a cadre of political professionals get to tell the rest of society what to do.

For an anarchist to make such arguments, whilst also supporting an openness to aristocracy, would be a weird kind of crypto-Marxism—a political concoction made all the more dangerous by the fact that it is disguised as a strategy for abolishing mastery.

Relatedly, there is good reason to believe that the idea of mixing democracy with aristocracy is also somewhat incoherent. The existence of a democracy means,

in essence, that the general public are the supreme authority within a political community, whilst the existence of an aristocracy means that supreme authority is held instead by the upper class. However, it is impossible to imagine a political community with more than one supreme authority: a supreme authority by definition is the highest within that community. Even if, for example, aristocrats like Pericles listen carefully to the concerns of the people, the community will, insofar as the final say goes to the upper class, nonetheless be an aristocracy. Just as, even if members of a democracy follow the proposals of certain people more than those of others, the political community will—insofar as such recommendations are followed in a genuinely voluntary way—nonetheless remain a democracy. As such, there is no way we can have aristocracy and democracy—either we want the people to be at the top or we do not. In fact, it was surely the failure to recognize the contradiction inherent in this two-faced kind of strategy—other versions of which have been democratic centralism, state socialism more generally, and even Bakunin's proposal for secret societies to control popular uprisings—that led to the implosion of the majority of leftist revolutions that defined (and doomed) the last century of human history.

What it ultimately comes down to is the question of whether or not we are willing to put our trust in the capabilities of the masses. However, I think it is clear what, as anarchists, our answer needs to be. It is true that people often make bad decisions, but this point is not relevant to democracy as much as it is to human psychology in general. Humans can be pretty stupid, and there is no political system that escapes this basic

fact. So democracies can indeed produce reprehensible outcomes (perhaps the execution of Socrates is an example), but there is no guarantee that aristocracies behave any better. If anything, democracy is surely the least-imperfect response to our all-too-human shortcomings. My assumption here is that political communities tend to reach the best outcomes when acting in accordance with the views of all members, rather than only those of a privileged few. This assumption may be controversial for some, but should be a given for anarchists. If we are unwilling to encourage people to organize themselves, and insist instead on introducing some kind of coercive vanguard, then me must surely give up on the idea of anarchy altogether. Anarchy was never merely about challenging the state, it was about challenging political mastery in all of its forms—even if the masters are waving red and black flags! If the heroic days of the proletariat, or le peuple, (or whomever!) really are over, then the heroic days of anarchism, too, have ended before they could even begin.

[V]

A brief summary: I have here made a case for the friendliness between anarchy and democracy, and then discussed the role that democracy could be playing in the anarchist movement—culminating in an appraisal of consensus decisionmaking. This was then tempered with a few points regarding the limited applicability of formal political association in general, after which a response to the democratic scepticism seen in "Fragments for the New Politics," arguing that anarchism is dependent on an undilutable commitment to democracy. Finally, I offer my last (and surely key) reason for thinking

that aligning ourselves with anti-statist democracy can greatly increase the potency of the anarchist agenda.

One thing we rarely think about seriously is how best to make our movement mainstream—how to enable anarchism to overflow from the squats, and the dustier corners of libraries, and into the forefront of collective consciousness. Relatedly, it can be easy to forget, having spent too much time within activist milieus, just how radical our political programme really is. Even in its most minimal sense, anarchism amounts to a rejection of the state, capitalism, nations, borders, banks, prisons, and the police, and it is thereby unavoidable that most new people find our ideas inaccessible to some degree. To be clear, I am not saying that we should be watering down our message at all, because it is our unapologetic distinction from the outdated rituals of modern society that grants anarchism its profound relevance. All I am suggesting is that there is a need for methods of making our alternative seem a little less scary.

I wonder if a rejection of democracy—among the most highly regarded of all political ideals, and something almost everyone takes for granted—further cements our lingering irrelevance. For many, claiming that anarchism is against rule by the people might be too much to take. If, on the other hand, we prove that a thoroughgoing commitment to democracy actually entails an unequivocal rejection of statist politics, one could hardly overestimate the gains. I think the idea that anarchy and democracy are actually conceptually very close, suggests that such an approach is worth experimenting with. Instead of rejecting democracy, why not use it as a foothold in collective consciousness, a kind of handrail capable of guiding people, just a little

more gently, to ur agenda? This was exactly my own passage to anarchism: having internalized from birth the reactionary dispositions of our culture, it was only upon recognizing that we actually do not live in a democracy, while still remaining firm in my belief in the democratic ideal, that I first found myself critiquing the legitimacy of the state. Rule by the people means the abolition of social hierarchy, and the time has come to emphasize this neglected truism.

Really our only obstacle is that the establishment has debased the common understanding of democracy. It is undeniable that this mechanism is nowadays the Trojan Horse of modern politics—an ancient ideal so deviously hollowed out that it has gone far in granting to secular authoritarianism an air of legitimacy. However, the democratic ideal, as universally assumed as it is underestimated, can still be turned against the powers that be. If anything, the fact that it has been so deeply internalized by mainstream culture offers us, in combination with its anarchist implications, a serious advantage. Democracy is sitting in the stomach of the state, and it is ready to be converted into a virus. Many people are already beginning to ask how democratic the current situation really is, and all we need to do is give these doubts a degree of political maturity. With some polishing, there is no reason to think that the democratic assumption will not eventually be one of the most useful tools in our revolutionary toolbox.

So perhaps it is not time for the anarchists, but instead for the parliamentarians, to do away with their talk of democracy. Because, if anarchism cannot offer rule by the people, then really nothing can.

Paul was always ready to meet, associate, and scrimmage with just about any of the more (or occasionally less) interesting and promising elements of the milieu. As an anarchist, he was riotously post-left, anti-work, and anti-civ, but at the same time a card-carrying member of the now staid-to-the-point-of-conservatism IWW! So it shouldn't be surprising that he unabashedly celebrates eclecticism as "a virtue,...desired and cultivated, a political gesture itself in an era of heterogeneity" in his introduction to the *Black Eye* anthology. Who else could write so well on everything from the New Model Army to the Paris Commune & the Situationists, the abolitionists and slave rebellions to the illegalists? Not to mention his excursions into the Grand Guignol or (one of his favorite films) *Cannibal Holocaust*... and keep us asking for more?

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